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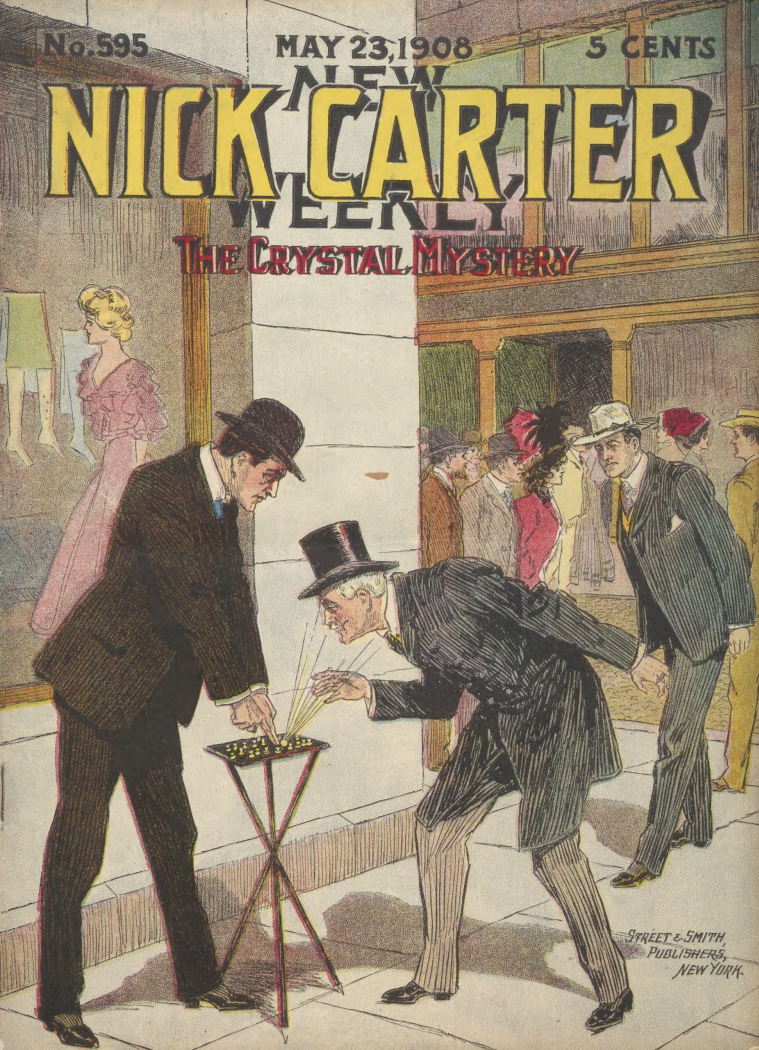
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE CRYSTAL MYSTERY



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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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THE CRYSTAL MYSTERY;

OR,

Nick Carter and the Magic Eye.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER

CHAPTER I.

MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCES.

"I tell you, Carter, taking it all together, it is the most puzzling affair that has come to my notice in my entire experience."

It was the commissioner of police of New York City who spoke. The two men were seated together in the office of the commissioner where Nick Carter had called in response to a letter received that same morning from the official.

"If you will give me the facts of the case, commissioner, chronologically, just as you know about them," replied the detective, smiling, "we will try to get down to cases."

"Oh, I'll do that in a minute, Nick. I have had several of our best men on the case; in fact, they are on it now; but there has been no result. The first case of the kind that was brought to my attention was the robbery of Jasper Golding."

"Jasper Golding? The banker?"

"Yes."

"Tell me about that."

"He called here one morning about this time, and asked to see me alone. I sent my secretary from the room, and listened to what he had to say."

"Yes."

"The substance of it was as follows: He had been strolling rather aimlessly down Broadway, late in the afternoon of the preceding day, he told me, and arriving at the corner of Thirtieth Street——"

"Which corner, commissioner?"

"The southwest corner."

"All right. Go ahead."

"Upon arriving at that corner, his attention was attracted by a 'hawker' who had erected a tripod stand just around the corner in Thirtieth Street. The stand supported a suit-case lying open, and arranged upon it was a medley of articles, mostly flash jewelry, collar-buttons, and things of that sort."

"Yes."

"He told me that the thing that attracted his attention—the article that drew him across the pavement to have a closer look at it, was a very remarkable crystal that occupied the central point of the display."

"A crystal? More likely it was glass."

"No; that was a point upon which he insisted. I suggested that it was glass, but he told me that he is an expert about crystals. They are a sort of a hobby with him, and he insisted that this was the finest one he ever saw."

"Well?"

"It was very large, cut round like a ball in the first place, and afterward recut into facets, like a diamond is cut; you understand?"

"Yes."

"He said that he instantly recognized the fact that it was a genuine crystal, and a superb one, and he wondered that it should be there in the midst of the cheap display that surrounded it."

"No doubt."

"His idea when he started toward the man who owned the display was to question him about the crystal, and possibly to purchase it to add to his collection; but he does not remember that he said anything to the man about it, after all."

"Does not *remember* that he did so? I do not understand that."

"I will tell you exactly what he told me."

"All right."

"He did not recall that he had said anything to the man at all about it. Either the crystal fascinated him, or something affected him rather strangely he thinks, for presently he pulled his eyes away from it with difficulty, and walked away.

"It was not until he had gone several blocks down Broadway—was at the corner of Twenty-sixth Street, in fact—that he discovered he had been robbed."

"While he stood in front of the hawker's stand?"

"He doesn't know about that. He only knows that he had been robbed. When and where it happened, he had, and has, no idea."

"There isn't very much to that story," remarked the detective, with a smile.

"No. That is what I thought at the time. It is what I said to him about it; and I would never have thought there was much to it, if it were the only case in which that hawker and his crystal figures. But before I go into them, I will finish with Golding."

"If you please."

"He had seven hundred dollars in money in his pockets at the time he stopped to look at the crystal. He also wore a diamond ring, a diamond scarf-pin, and a valuable watch."

"Which were also taken, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, they were untouched."

"And only the money was missing?"

"Only the money; nothing else."

"That would suggest that Golding might have been mistaken about having had that amount in his pockets at the time."

"So I suggested to him; but he is positive."

"Or that he lost it out of his pockets."

"I suggested that, also, but he scouts the idea, insisting that he knows it was in his pocket less than five minutes before he stopped on that corner."

"How does he know that it was there? Did he take it out of his pocket?"

"No! it was, he told me, in a roll, in his right-hand trousers pocket. He recalls feeling its presence there with his hand, just before he made that stop."

"How long was he there in front of the hawker's stand?"

"He doesn't know exactly. He says it must have been a short time, although rain was falling gently when he turned away, and he does not recall that rain had begun to fall when he made the stop."

"Possibly some one brushed against him while he stood there looking at the crystal, and so picked his pocket."

"I suggested that, also. He says he does not remember that any one did so, and is sure he would recall it if such a thing had occurred. He insists that he is always particular about avoiding such things as that."

"Well, commissioner, on the face of it, there isn't much to that case, as it stands."

"That was precisely my own estimate of it. In fact I paid very little attention to it, save to send a couple of my men up there to look the man over, who has the crystal."

"Well? What did they find?"

"Nothing. Not even the man with the crystal."

"Oh, I see! Well?"

"Then came the complaint of Judith Waring."

"The actress?"

"Yes."

"What is her story?"

"In effect it is much the same as Golding's. She was walking up Fifth Avenue alone, on her way to a luncheon at the Holland House. At the corner of Twenty-fifth Street, near the Worth monument, she saw a hawker with his tripod stand, displaying wares. Ordinarily she would have passed directly by, but a beautiful crystal that occupied the center of the display attracted her attention, and she stopped."

"Well?"

"Like Golding, she is not sure about the length of

time she remained there, but believes it to have been only a few moments. Then she went on her way. Now, right here is something strange."

"What is it?"

"She had left the Fifth Avenue Hotel allowing herself just sufficient time to walk to the Holland to be in time for the luncheon. To her surprise, when she arrived there, she was fifteen minutes late—more than the time that it should have taken her to walk the entire distance."

"That is right; but the difference in time of clocks——"

"She went by her own watch."

"Well; go on."

"As she seated herself at the table, apologizing for her tardiness, she put her hand to her throat—a habit she has, she tells me—to see if her brooch, a very valuable one, was in place. It was gone."

"It might have fallen off."

"A valuable diamond ring that she had worn on her finger, and which could not have fallen off, you will admit, was also missing."

"I suppose she did not forget to wear it that day; eh?"

"No. And that is not all. She carries a gold chatelaine bag. When she started out, it contained one hundred dollars in bills, even money. That was also missing."

"You are getting interesting now, commissioner."

"I'll be more so before I have finished, Nick."

"All right."

"Her other rings, also of considerable value, the gold bag at her belt, and so forth, had not been disturbed."

"Humph! It was the same hawker, I suppose?"

"Evidently. The description of the crystal is the same. There was no dress-suit case in this instance. The wares were displayed on a square piece of velvet, spread on a board, or something of the sort."

"What did you do in this case?"

"What could I do? Nothing."

"Does Miss Waring recall that people crowded her while she stood there?"

"On the contrary, she insists that she stood there quite alone."

"Did she talk with the man?"

"She says not. She did intend to ask him something about the beautiful crystal, but she did not do so."

"Why not?"

"She does not know. The whim took her suddenly, to go on her way, and she started without saying a word to him."

"And she is not sure how long she stood there?"

"No. But for the fact that she was late at the Holland, she would insist that it was not three minutes all told."

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGEST ROBBERIES ON RECORD.

"Are there other cases of the kind, commissioner?" asked the detective.

"Yes, indeed. There are several others, as you will soon hear."

"Well, let me have them all. Out of the many we may find one that is suggestive of something."

"Then you will accomplish more than I have been able to do."

"If you did not believe I would do that, you would not have sent for me."

"Quite right, Nick."

"Well?"

"I think you know Doctor Parsons, don't you?"

"I know of him; and about him. Why?"

"He was the next victim."

"Indeed. How did this one happen?"

"The doctor was crossing the northeast corner of Washington Square, from Fifth Avenue to the University building, when he came upon the hawker with the crystal."

"The same outfit, eh?"

"Precisely."

"Well?"

"He was in a hurry and walking rapidly. He had no thought of stopping anywhere until he had kept the engagement he had made with some gentlemen at the University building."

"But he did stop, eh?"

"The hawker was standing close to the Arch, just south of it. The doctor was passing hurriedly, when chancing to glance in that direction his attention was arrested, and he stopped. As in the other cases, it was the crystal that attracted him."

"Quite a remarkable crystal, that."

"You will think so before I have done."

"Well, what happened then?"

"Almost the same things that happened in the case of Miss Waring. He looked at the crystal and presently walked on, without having said a word to the hawker. There had been nobody else near them, he

swears. He had calculated upon being five minutes ahead of time at his engagement, and in reality he was nearly ten minutes late. His watch, fifty dollars in money, and a tissue-paper package containing twelve unset diamonds which he valued at three thousand dollars, were missing."

"Rather a heavy loss."

"Yes; and the doctor swears that the hawker did not approach him, and that at no time were they within touching-distance of each other."

"That's odd."

"I told him if he would make a charge against the hawker, I would have the man arrested, and we would see what could be done; but he insisted that he could not make the charge so that it could be substantiated, for the reason that he would have to swear on the stand that the hawker did not come near him."

"Have you had that hawker looked up a second time?"

"I have tried to do so."

"What do you mean? That you can't find him?"

"I mean that he has not been found—as yet."

"Other people seem to find him, all right."

"Yes. I will, too, presently."

"One moment, commissioner. Now that I am on the case, I will ask you to call off your dogs and let the hawker alone. If he is the nigger in the fence, as now appears, I would like an opportunity to watch him before he is made suspicious."

"That's all right. I know your methods. But you'll have to find him before you devote much time to watching him."

"Oh, I'll find him, all right."

"It's a very mysterious affair, Nick, but I believe that there are confederates somewhere, don't you?"

"Very likely. What's the next case?"

"One of the leaders of Tammany Hall."

"Eh? You don't say! It must have shocked him greatly. Who was it?"

"Jimmy Garden."

"Well, well! Wonder upon wonder. What was his experience?"

"He was down on the East Side, looking after the welfare of his constituents. He had left his friends and was making his way toward the Bowery when his eyes lit upon a tripod and a black velvet pad upon which was spread a number of wares. In the middle of them was the crystal again. It was that which attracted him."

"Yes."

"He stopped and stepped toward the display, remarking as he did so:

"'That's a fine bit of glass, my friend.'

"'Yes, sir,' he heard the man reply. That is all that he remembers having been said at all. He says he looked at the crystal and then moved on. He doesn't think he lingered there three minutes. When he went out that afternoon he had a roll of considerably more than a thousand dollars in his pocket. He had spent and given away about two hundred, and there must have been a thousand left. He is not sure of the exact amount. He did not feel for it until after he reached the Bowery and entered a saloon. It was gone."

"Here is a case where there were many other people around him; eh?"

"Yes; but Garden is confident that no one touched him. He has been through that neighborhood all his life, never had his pocket picked, never had anything stolen from him. He swears that it must have been the hawker with the crystal, but he also swears that the hawker was all the time at the opposite side of the tripod from him, and at no time touched him."

"So again there is no case."

"None."

"Next—if there is a next."

"There are still several of them, and I think you ought to hear them all."

"So do I. Go on."

"Do you know, or have you ever heard of a gambler in the city named Harry Paxton?"

"Yes. I have a sort of acquaintance with him."

"He was the next victim."

"I should have thought Harry much too shrewd to have been robbed in any such manner."

"Well, he wasn't."

"Tell me about it."

"Harry came out of the Imperial Hotel one afternoon—four days ago, it was—and started down Broadway. He walked to Twenty-third Street and turned through it toward Sixth Avenue. Half-way through the street he saw the hawker and his outfit."

"And stopped, as the others did, to observe the crystal?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"He lost his bank-roll, as gamblers call it, of three thousand dollars, and also a smaller roll of fifty dollars, that he carried in another pocket. His watch and diamonds were not disturbed, and it was nearly an

hour afterward before he discovered that he was broke."

"What was his experience during the loss of it?"

"Practically the same as the others."

"Nevertheless, tell me about it."

"He was passing and saw the crystal. It attracted his attention, although he doesn't know why because he takes no interest in that sort of thing. Nevertheless, he drew near to the tripod to have a closer look at it. Presently he went on. That is all."

"How long did he stand there?"

"Two or three minutes, he states."

"No brushing against him in this case?"

"He says not."

"The hawker remained on his own side of the tripod all the time?"

"He says so."

"No crowd around him?"

"No. Several people were standing about, but there was no crowd, and no crowding."

"He had no idea, as he left the place, that he had been robbed?"

"None whatever; not until about an hour later."

"So he could not swear to a case against the hawker?"

"No more than the others."

"Have you got another case up your sleeve?"

"Yes. I have saved the most astounding one till the last."

"I supposed you would do that. What is it?"

"No other than Mrs. Van Skoyt. Fortunately she did not lose much, but the case is none the less remarkable for that."

"How did the affair happen in her case, commissioner?"

"She was driving in the park, or, rather, was just entering the park, behind her team of bays. Her coachman and footman were on the box. The hawker was in the park a little way, far enough to be out of sight of the streets and of the officer near the entrance."

"Yes. But he was not displaying his wares there, was he?"

"Not exactly. He had the tripod out, but nothing save the crystal was showing, and that was sending out a thousand rays in the sunlight, as she was driving past. It caught her eye, and she signaled for the driver to stop. She approached the crystal and stood looking at it for a moment. She says she did not speak to the man at all; is sure she did not, but her footman who was standing at the carriage door, twenty feet away, is equally positive that he saw them in conversation, although he could not hear what was said. Presently she returned to the carriage and drove on. When she arrived home, her chatelaine bag was missing, and it had contained three diamond rings valued at about seven hundred dollars altogether. The bag itself was worth about fifty dollars. That is all in her case."

"Did the hawker come out from behind his tripod in this case?"

"No; she says not; the footman says not. When they drove past him the second time——"

"They drove past him the second time, did they?"

"Yes."

"What were you going to say about it?"

"He was just closing his tripod, and making ready to move away from the spot."

"Who told you that?"

"The footman."

"When did he tell it to you?"

"When he was sent here to report the matter to me."

"Did you see Mrs. Van Skoyt in person about it?"

"Yes, later."

"Did you talk with her in the presence of the footman, or with the footman in her presence?"

"No. I saw them separately. But I don't see——"

"No. Does that cover all the cases, so far as you know about them?"

"Yes; up to the present time that covers all I know."

CHAPTER III.

TRACING A PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCE.

"Now, Nick, what do you think about them?" asked the commissioner.

"Well, it is difficult to tell what to say, just at present, commissioner. Of course I have some idea about the matter, but I would rather not enlarge upon it just yet, for it is *only* an idea, you know."

"Humph! I'm glad that you have even got an idea. I confess that I couldn't find one that would hold water at all. I suppose you will look up the man with the crystal; eh?"

"Ultimately—yes. At present I think I will have a talk with some of the people who have been robbed—for robberies they are, without question."

"Of course."

"I wonder if I should find Mrs. Van Skoyt at home now, commissioner?"

"I can easily find out for you, over the telephone. I will tell her that I am sending you there, if she is at home."

"Please do so."

A little more than half an hour later the detective found himself in the sumptuous home of the society woman, and presently she came into the room where he waited to see her.

"You are Mr. Carter?" she asked brightly. She was a beautiful young matron, and one who was always thoroughly self-possessed.

"Yes, madam," replied the detective. "I have called to ask you some questions about, or, rather, concerning, your encounter with the man in the park, at the time you lost your bag containing the diamonds. Will you tell me about it?"

"There is nothing more than what I have already told the commissioner, sir."

"Nevertheless, I would like to hear it at first hand, if you don't mind going over the ground again."

"Oh, not at all, if you think it necessary."

"You had just driven into the park when you first saw the man with the crystal?" asked Nick.

"Yes."

"What was it that first attracted your attention to him?"

"I think it was the flashing of the rays of the sun upon that wonderful crystal."

"So you really thought it wonderful, did you?"

"Yes; I think so still."

"What impelled you to stop your carriage, and get out of it?"

"I scarcely know. It was an unprecedented thing for me to do."

"Please try to reply directly to the question."

"Why, I think it was the desire to have a nearer view of the beautiful article. Would you call it a stone?"

"I think so. You say it was unprecedented for you to leave your carriage in that way, and in such a place?"

"Quite so. Yes."

"How long were you out of it?"

"I am not sure. It all seems rather vague to me now. To the best of my recollection, not more than three or four minutes; perhaps not so long."

"And then what did you do?"

"Reentered my carriage and drove on. But there is a funny thing about that, too, Mr. Carter."

"What is it?"

"I don't seem to recall reentering the carriage; I mean the act of getting into it; of the footman's closing the door, you know, and of giving the order—oh, yes, I do recall giving the order to drive on."

"Did you look back toward the man with the crystal?"

"No; I don't think so."

"While you were out of the carriage, did you engage in conversation with him?"

"No."

"Not at all?"

"No. I do not remember that I exchanged a word with him."

"When did you miss the chatelaine?"

"Within the next half-hour, I think."

"Was there any money in it?"

"Twenty dollars, I think. No more."

"When you discovered your loss, did you drive back toward the place where you had seen the man with the crystal?"

"Yes; although at that time I did not connect him with the loss of it."

"Do you now?"

"Not in my own mind; no. But after what the commissioner said to me about others losing articles mysteriously after seeing the man, I have thought it strange, to say the least."

"Naturally. Where is the footman who was with you that day?"

"He is here. Would you like to see him?"

"If you please; and will you let me see him alone?"

"Certainly. I will have him sent to you."

"And after I have talked with him, may I see you again for a moment, madam?"

"Why, I suppose so."

"Thank you. Now, if you will send the footman, please."

He came presently, a typical footman, trained in every act and motion that belonged to the fulfilment of his duties.

"I want you to tell me about the incident in the park when madam lost her diamonds," the detective said to him. "Do you remember all about it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Begin at the moment madam directed you to stop the carriage, and tell me everything that occurred after that. Omit nothing, no matter how trivial it may seem to you."

"Yes, sir. Madam called to Thomas, the coachman, to stop, and he drew up at the side. I got down and opened the door for madam. She stepped out and walked back a little way to where a man was standing

with a tripod in front of him. There was a lump of glass—at least it looked like it to me—on top of the tripod."

"Well, what then?"

"Madam stood in front of it. She seemed to be examining the glass ball."

"Did she touch it with her fingers?"

"No, sir. Madam only looked at it."

"Did she talk with the man behind the tripod?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are positive about that?"

"I know that he talked to madam. I could see his lips move, although I did not hear a sound. And madam seemed to listen. I am positive that madam replied to him."

"How long a time did they appear to talk together?"

"Only a moment or two."

"Did the man approach her near enough to have touched her with his hands?"

"No, sir."

"What happened after that?"

"Madam returned to the carriage, entered it, and as I closed the door told me to drive on slowly—that is, to tell Thomas to do so."

"The commissioner of police told me that you passed the man with the tripod a second time—a little later. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me how that happened. How came it that you were back there again so soon?"

"By madam's direction."

"Ah! Let me hear about that, if you please. Leave nothing out, now."

"When madam entered the carriage, after looking at the bit of glass, she directed that we drive on slowly, as I have stated, sir."

"Yes."

"We had gone but a little way when she again called for us to stop and again she got down from the carriage. Then madam directed us to wait where we were for five minutes, and then to drive slowly back after her."

"One moment. Are you quite positive about all this? Are you sure that you are telling it to me exactly as it happened?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Very well. Go on."

"When madam gave us that direction, she walked back toward the man with the tripod."

"Rapidly or slowly?"

"Rather the former, I should say, sir."

"How far away were you from the tripod at that time?"

"About what would represent two city blocks, sir."

"Did you regard the proceeding as at all strange?"

"I do not permit myself to question the conduct of my——"

"There, there! That will do. You have brains and you have judgment. I am not asking you to criticize your mistress. I am calling for facts. You have opinions, even if you do not express them, so I ask you again if you regarded the proceeding as strange?"

"It was at least unusual, sir."

"Did you follow her back immediately?"

"After five minutes we did."

"Could you see the man with the tripod, from where you were?"

"Indistinctly; yes, sir."

"Did you notice madam when she approached him?"

"I could not help doing that, sir."

"Did she stop and address him again?"

"No, sir."

"Did she speak to him at all?"

"Not that I could determine, sir. I should say that madam did not speak with the man that time."

"What did she do?"

"Nothing at all, that I could see."

"Merely walked past him, eh?"

"Yes, sir; a little way."

"How far?"

"Possibly fifty feet."

"What did she do then?"

"Madam turned about and returned until she was almost abreast of him again, sir, and there she waited for us. I opened the door for her, and she reentered the carriage, and then we were told to drive on through the park."

"Did she look back again toward the man?"

"My eyes were in front, sir, and I could not answer that."

"What was the man with the tripod doing when you drove toward him the second time?"

"Closing the thing up, sir, and getting ready to leave, I thought."

"Is that all you know about the matter?"

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DETECTIVE EXPLAINS HIS THEORY.

When Mrs. Van Skoyt reentered the room Nick asked the footman to remain a moment. Then, addressing the woman directly, the detective asked:

"Madam, I would like to ask a very few questions more. After that I will not trouble you."

"I am at your service, sir," Mrs. Van Skoyt replied.

"Will you kindly recall again the circumstances of leaving your carriage to obtain a closer view of the crystal?"

"Certainly."

"Your recollection of the incident was that you did not remain there more than two or three or four minutes, is it not?"

"It is."

"Whereupon you reentered your carriage?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave your carriage again before you arrived home, after your drive?"

"I did not."

"You are quite positive about that, madam?"

"Certainly, Mr. Carter."

"And upon entering the carriage, do you remember what order you gave to the coachman?"

"I told the footman to tell him to drive on through the park and return."

"You did not see the man with the crystal again after that?"

"No; not at all. As I have told you, I discovered my loss about half an hour later, as nearly as I can remember. We were at the upper end of the park then, or near it. We drove back over the route we had followed in going out, and both the coachman and footman scanned the road as we passed, in search of my bag. I did the same, and yet I could not understand how it could have fallen from the carriage, even though detached from its fastenings."

"Thank you, madam. I don't think I need trouble you further just at present."

He did not so much as glance toward the footman who had told him a tale so different, but he could feel, even though he could not see, the indignation of the man at being forced into the appearance of having told a deliberate lie.

But Nick had his reasons for keeping his eyes away from the man. He believed that the footman would look him up later, in an effort to justify himself; and in that he was not mistaken, as it came about.

He took his leave at once, and hastened down-town. It was an hour in the afternoon when he believed he could see Miss Judith Waring, and he wished also to talk with her.

The detective found her at home in her cozy apartment at the Algernon, and was received at once.

"Miss Waring," he said, "will you carry your mind back to a certain circumstance that happened not long ago, when you were very strangely robbed of some valuables?"

"Oh! You are referring to the time I stopped to see the crystal, Mr. Carter?"

"Yes."

"Odd affair, wasn't it?"

"Exceedingly. I want you to tell me about it, if you will."

"But really, there is nothing to tell, you know."

"Oh, yes, there is, if you will pardon me for contradicting you. You were on your way to a luncheon at the Holland, were you not?"

"Yes. There was to be quite a party of us."

"You started to go there from the Fifth Avenue Hotel, I believe."

"Yes; I had called upon some friends who were stopping there."

"And allowed yourself just about the requisite time to get to the Holland, as I understand it?"

"That is correct."

"You encountered the man with the crystal at the corner of Twenty-fifth Street?"

"Yes."

"Was he alone?"

"There was no one near him at the moment, if that is what you mean."

"It is. What first attracted your attention to him, Miss Waring?"

"I was not attracted to him at all. I scarcely saw him. I don't think I could even describe him if you should ask me to do so, except to say that he was rather tall and dark."

"It was the crystal that attracted you, then?"

"Decidedly."

"Will you explain to me what sort of attraction it possessed for you?"

"I remember that I thought it about the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. I felt that I must have a nearer view. It seemed as if my eyes were drawn to it."

"Exactly. Now tell me how long a time you paused there."

"Oh, only a moment. It could not have been more.

I do not remember that I lingered at all; but then I am a sort of irresponsible person, I suppose. I might really have remained there three or four minutes, or even five, I suppose."

"Or even fifteen minutes, Miss Waring?"

"No; positively not so long as that."

"And yet you were that late at the luncheon, were you not?"

"Yes; and it was strange, was it not? By my own watch, too."

"How do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it at all, save only that I must have deceived myself when I looked at my watch."

"You lost your brooch, and a ring from your finger, I am told."

"Yes; and also a hundred dollars in money."

"Did the man with the crystal at any time approach near enough to you to have taken the articles?"

"No; he positively did not. And, anyhow, he could not have taken the ring from my finger without my knowledge, could he?"

"It would seem impossible. Yet you lost it."

"I certainly did."

"You are positive that you wore it that day?"

"As positive as that I wore the hair on my head; yes, sir. I always wore it."

"You are equally positive about the hundred dollars and the brooch?"

"Certainly."

"Have you ever seen the man since?"

"No."

"Now, tell me, do you recall that you experienced any strange sensation when you approached the crystal, or the man who had it in charge?"

"Not at all."

"You did not look closely at the man?"

"I barely noticed him at all. I do remember his eyes in one glance, but that is all."

"Tell me about his eyes, if you please."

"I can't, save that they were dark; black, I should say."

"There was nothing peculiar about them—or him?"

"Not that I remember."

"What do you remember about the circumstance?"

"I have told you all, already."

"You did not enter into conversation with the man?"

"No."

"Nor ask him about the crystal?"

"No. The sight of it affected me strangely, rather, now that I think about it. I seemed to know all about it and did not care to ask."

"Ah! That is better. Do you recall leaving the spot?"

"Yes. I remember turning away and resuming my walk up the avenue."

"Did it occur to you then that you were late?"

"No. Not at all."

"When you discovered your loss did it occur to you that it had happened while you were looking at the crystal?"

"It was the only circumstance I could recall where it might have happened; but I dismissed the thought at once. The missing ring was sufficient to make me do that. It could not have been taken from my hand without my knowledge."

"And yet it was so taken."

"That is true, too."

"If you are correct about the watch—I refer to its time—there was a lapse somewhere of fifteen minutes concerning which you remember nothing."

"Why, yes, I suppose so, if I *am* correct about it. But am I?"

"Don't you really think that you are?"

"Yes, to be perfectly frank with you, I do not see how I could have made such a mistake."

"I don't think you did make one, Miss Waring."

"Do you mean that there *was* a lapse of time that I have forgotten?"

"It looks that way to me."

"But how could such a thing happen?"

"That is precisely what I am endeavoring to determine. One other woman than yourself, with whom I have talked to-day, who has also suffered in the same way you did, passed through a short period of forgetfulness, only she is not aware that she did so. It is on the testimony of her servant that I discovered the fact."

"Do you mean, Mr. Carter, that the man hypnotized me?"

"It is the only theory of the case that will hold water."

"But—it seems to me absurd."

"So it would to most others. I will ask you not to mention my idea about it to others with whom you might talk."

"I certainly will not do that. I have always contended that no person could be hypnotized unless willingly."

"That isn't exactly what you mean, Miss Waring."

"Then what do I mean?"

"You mean that you have always contended that no person could be hypnotized *un*willingly. Am I not right?"

"It is a distinction without a difference, is it not?"

"No; it is a distinction *and* a difference. *Un*willingly would infer that you knew about the effort to hypnotize you, and were contending against it. One might be in a negative condition between the two, and so fall an easy victim to such practises. In fact, that is the favorite condition with all hypnotists, and the crystal is the favorite weapon with them."

"Weapon?"

"I should have said 'means to an end,' perhaps."

"I do not understand."

"One is told, by a hypnotist, to gaze into the depths of a crystal. The act, the effort to see what is there, to study the lights, and whatever is reflected there, so concentrates the mind, or, rather, focuses the thought, that the person becomes at once an easy subject, even though that person might be an impossible one under other circumstances."

"I confess the whole thing is too complex for me," she replied, laughing.

CHAPTER V.

NICK CARTER CLINCHES AN ARGUMENT.

There was only one of the four men who had been robbed whom the detective cared to talk with further about the case, and that was Doctor Parsons, and he had several reasons for desiring an interview with him. One was that the doctor was at the head of his profession, and would doubtless take up the suggestion of hypnotism with him in an understanding manner; another was that in that case there was another apparent lapse of time which could be explained by no other method. He wished to hear what the doctor would have to say about it.

The detective telephoned to him first to know if the physician would give him an immediate interview, and then he hurried to the great man's office.

"I suppose you have come about that loss of mine, in Washington Square, or, at least, in the neighborhood of it," he said, as soon as the detective entered.

"Yes. I wanted to talk with you about it, doctor. I have already talked with two other victims, and presently I will tell you about what they said."

"Thank you. I would like to hear. Now, what do you wish to know from me?"

"I want to know, bluntly, how you account for the missing fifteen minutes."

"Eh? The missing——" The doctor stopped and laughed heartily.

"I confess," he said, "that I had considered the other losses of more importance. Fifty dollars in money, twelve unset diamonds worth three thousand, and my watch—fifteen minutes doesn't cut much ice alongside of them, does it?"

"With me it is the most important loss you sustained."

"Well, I'm glad you think so. I wish I could view it in the same light; only I can't."

"Will you tell me how you account for them?"

"The fifteen minutes?"

"Yes."

"Bluntly, then, I'm hanged if I know!"

"You had calculated to be five minutes ahead of time at your appointment, while as a matter of fact you were ten minutes late. Isn't that true?"

"Entirely."

"And you can't account for it?"

"No; unless my watch was wrong, and that might very possibly have been the case. You see, my watch was gone, so I cannot swear as to that."

"But in the other cases there were also unaccountable lapses of time."

"Yes? Well?"

"You looked into the facets of a very beautiful crystal, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And behind it stood a man who was looking at you; eh?"

"He may have been; I do not know."

"The probability is that he was doing so."

"Yes; we will admit that."

"What do you think of the theory of hypnotism, doctor?"

"Bosh! Folderol. I was perfectly in possession of my senses every minute of the time I stood there; and, besides, that duffer couldn't have hypnotized *me*."

"Why not you as well as another?"

"Because I tell you he couldn't do it. It's nonsense, that's all. It is not worthy of a thought."

"Then how did the man get away with your watch and the other things?"

"I don't think he did so."

"Who did?"

"That is a question, my dear sir, that applies to your profession; not to mine."

"In this case, doctor, I think it applies even more

to yours than to mine. I believe that you were thrown for a time into a hypnotic state, and that while in that condition you shelled out your valuables," said the detective firmly.

"Then you had better change your calling, that's all I've got to say about it."

"Don't you believe in hypnotism at all?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then why do you repudiate it in this case?"

"Because I was there; because I was the party in the matter. Because I know. I did not awaken out of any sleep. My eyes did not feel heavy. I had no sense of having been 'away,' as some of them express it. And I would have experienced all those things had I been made a subject of hypnotism."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Of course I am sure of it. I am not a subject for hypnotic experiments. I'd be a fine chap to practise medicine, wouldn't I, if every Tom, Dick, and Harry who happened to be on a corner hawking wares could put me under hypnotic influence by simply raising his hand, or looking me in the eyes, or doing anything of that sort?"

"Did he look you in the eye, doctor?"

"I don't think he did. I don't remember much about him, in fact."

"Doesn't the fact that you remember next to nothing about him strengthen my theory?"

"No; it does not. It's bosh, I tell you!"

"Well, leaving your own experiences out of the question, and taking that of Miss Waring, for example. There was also a lapse of fifteen minutes in her case, and she did not lose her watch, but had it by her to prove, or, rather, sustain, what she believed. How do you account for that?"

"I don't account for it."

"But even if you refuse to believe that the man hypnotized you, may he not have hypnotized her?"

"Not without her having some knowledge of the fact before or after it happened. Has she such knowledge?"

"No more than you have."

"Then it was impossible."

"Do you give that as your professional opinion?"

"I'm not giving professional opinions this morning. I charge a hundred dollars for the least of those."

"There is a lapse of time also in the case of Mrs. Van Skoyt, concerning which she has no knowledge at all. She has not even heard about it, and don't know that it occurred; but two of her servants know about it. How do you account for that?"

"I don't account for it."

"There we have the absolute proof that the forgotten lapse of time occurred, and it indicates unconsciousness on her part, doesn't it?"

"Either that—or somebody lies."

"You would hardly say that of Mrs. Van Skoyt, would you, doctor?"

"Well, there are her two servants in the case."

"They gave me their evidence before they knew that she was not cognizant of the fact; or, rather, one of them did."

"Oh, well, somebody lied. You may be sure of it. Possibly she did something that was foolish and prefers to forget that she did so. It is that way with society women."

"You refuse entirely to accept the theory of hypnotism, do you, doctor?"

"Now, look here, Mr. Carter, understand me. I do not deny that there is such a thing as hypnotism. I do not deny that it is largely practised. I do not even deny that it might be accomplished under extraordinary circumstances, on the streets of the city; but I do deny that it could be done as you say, and leave the subject entirely without sensation of any sort to tell that a strange experience had been encountered. That I do deny. In my own case, in this instance, I walked down Fifth Avenue and crossed the corner of Washington Square, passing beneath the arch. In passing there I saw a man who had wares to sell, and among them was a large and rather beautiful crystal that attracted me. I approached and looked at it. The man behind the tripod paid no attention to me. He did not speak to me or I to him. I examined the thing a moment, and passed on: and that is all there is about it. It is the height of absurdity to tell me that I was hypnotized."

"Isn't a crystal a medium that is often employed in the practise of hypnotism?"

"I believe so."

"Did you take that crystal in your hand, doctor?"

"No; I did not touch it."

"Did you see anything in its depths?"

"Only the lights and shades produced by the facets. What would you expect me to see? My future life, or past life? Really, Mr. Carter, if you are going in for fortune-telling, why don't you look up one of the cult and get him to explain this case for you?"

"I don't suppose you really intend that to be an impertinence, do you, doctor?" asked the detective quietly.

"No; but the whole thing is so absurd, Carter. Can't you see it?"

"Who is the best authority on hypnotism in the city, doctor?"

"I don't know anybody who knows any more about it than I do myself. Hackenbush calls himself an authority, but he is a dreamer, and, incidentally, considerable of a crank."

"You mean Doctor Peter Hackenbush?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you would like to get those diamonds back again, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, indeed I would."

"And you would not object very strenuously, would you, even if they came back after it was proved that you were hypnotized when they were stolen?"

"Oh, I don't know about that. But we need not argue it, since such a preposterous thing could not be established. I'd like to get the watch, too, Carter."

"If you should happen to run across that man with the crystal again, will you make an effort to bring him to my house to see me?"

"You bet your life I will. But I'm not likely to run across him. The police have been looking for him, the commissioner tells me, and he cannot be found."

"Yet he has been very much in evidence since the police have been searching for him. He seems to have a talent for keeping out of sight."

"So he does."

"I don't suppose you have an idea that the watch, the money, and the diamonds jumped out of your pockets of themselves, have you, doctor?"

"Hardly that."

"Were you in any crowd before or after you saw that man, where your pocket might have been picked?"

"No; not after I had occasion to know that the things were in my possession; and that is the most puzzling part of the whole affair."

"How long before you encountered that man were you aware that the articles were still in your possession?"

"Why, only a few minutes. I had just seen a patient, up the avenue a few blocks, to whom I had shown the diamonds. On leaving there, I compared my time with his, and I also changed a twenty-dollar bill for him, so I know I still had the money, too, when I left there."

"And where did you go from there?"

"Straight to the square, and across it, after stopping for a moment, as I have said."

"Don't you see that all this strengthens the theory of hypnotism; in fact, that it clinches it?"

"No, I do not."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SEVENTH ROBBERY.

When the detective arrived at his own home after his interview with Doctor Parsons, he was not at all surprised to discover that the footman from the Van Skoyts was waiting to see him.

"I hope you'll pardon me, sir, for coming to see you," he said, "but I felt that I must do so in justice to myself. My name is Martin, sir."

"I am very glad that you did come to see me, Martin," replied the detective, smiling. "To tell the truth, I rather expected you."

"I thought you would, sir."

"Well, what have you got to say, now that you are here?"

"I hardly know how to say it, sir."

"There is only one way to do that, Martin, and that is to say it right out. If it is your wish to talk confidentially with me, you may be assured that what you say will not go any farther."

"Thank you, sir. After what occurred to-day, I was afraid that you might think that Thomas and I might know something about the lost property. People are always ready to suspect servants, sir."

"I did not think of suspecting either of you, Martin. Such a thing did not occur to me. Moreover, I knew that you had told me the truth."

"In spite of what madam said, sir?"

"Yes."

"But she was so positive. It made a liar of me, sir, or of——"

"Or of your mistress? No, don't say that, for it did not. She was mistaken, that is all."

"But how could she be mistaken, sir?"

"She had forgotten, Martin; and I hope you will do nothing to remind her of the fact."

"Certainly not, sir. And that is one reason for my call upon you, Mr. Carter."

"What is?"

"I wished to say that if you should question me again in her presence, or in the presence of any person who might repeat to madam what I had said, I should insist that she did not get out of the carriage the second time."

"And uphold her in her statement. That proves that you are a good and a loyal servant, Martin."

"And if I had known before you questioned me how madam understood the matter I would not have told you what I did."

"Certainly not. I understand you perfectly, and I like you all the better for it. Now, have you anything more to tell me, that escaped your memory this morning? If you have, remember that it will not be repeated."

"Yes, sir, there is something else."

"What is it, Martin?"

"I perhaps ought not to say anything about it. I really did not intend to do so in the beginning, because it was none of my business; and possibly, sir, I also do madam an injustice in doing so. But after what occurred this morning, and in the light of all that has happened, I feel that I should tell you about it."

"Certainly, Martin, tell me. It may help greatly in unraveling this mystery—for there is a mystery."

"Perhaps not as great a one as you think, Mr. Carter."

"Martin, you must tell me what you mean."

"Very well, sir. In the first place, I wish to say that during all the time I have served madam, I have never known her to leave her carriage in such a manner before."

"I understand that. She herself told me the same thing."

"But in this case she left it twice, and denied to you, even in my presence, that she did it the second time."

"We will pass that."

"You asked me, sir, if when she went back the second time, when she was walking, if I saw her speak to the man with the tripod, and I told you I did not."

"Yes; that is correct."

"Well, sir, I did not see her *speak* to him, but I saw her throw something to him."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir. I could not tell what it was at that distance, but I have no doubt that it was the chatelaine bag she says she lost. I am sure of it. I think, sir, that she wished to send some money to some one without letting anybody know about it, and that the man with the tripod met here there by appointment, to take charge of it. I think she got out the first time to make sure it was the right man, and that then she got out the second time and walked back telling us to wait five minutes and then follow her, in order to give him the money. It must be some sort of blackmail, sir."

"What a case you have built up out of nothing, Martin!" said the detective, smiling. "But I must reassure you."

"How, sir?"

"I think you are right in supposing that it was the bag she threw to the man, but I also believe, and you must do the same, that she was entirely unconscious of the act."

"How could that be so, sir?"

"Have you never heard of hypnotism, Martin?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Madam was hypnotized when she did that. She did not know she did it. She did not know anything she did, and now she does not remember that she was out of the carriage or that she walked back toward that man or that she saw him again at all."

"Do you really believe that, sir?"

"I do."

"It relieves my mind greatly, sir, for I was afraid. Madam has been good to me. I screwed up my courage to come here and tell you this because I thought that you might help her if she were in trouble of any kind. Thomas and I talked it over and agreed between us that it was the thing to do, because we knew that you would respect our confidences."

"You did perfectly right. It would have been proper in any case."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now, is there anything more? You look as though you had not got everything off your mind yet."

"There is one thing more, sir."

"What is it, now?"

"That man—the one with the tripod—I met him on the street when I was on my way here."

"You did? Where?"

"Near the corner of Twenty-eighth Street and Madison Avenue, sir."

"Did he have his tripod with him?"

"I did not see it. I don't think he did have it."

"Which way was he going?"

"I watched him. He turned through Twenty-eighth Street toward Fifth Avenue and Broadway."

"Perhaps you can describe him to me, Martin. I have found no one else who was able to do so."

"Yes, sir, I can."

"Well?"

"He is quite tall, sir, six feet, I should say. His skin is very dark. One might almost mistake him for a colored man were it not for his features and his perfectly straight hair. He has very white and even

teeth, and the most wonderful eyes I ever saw. He looked at me, too, as I passed him, and I felt a shiver all over me. I thought he remembered me."

"Very probably. How was he dressed?"

"Like a gentleman, sir."

"Well dressed, eh? How was he dressed the other day when you saw him in the park?"

"As befitted his calling at that time, I should say, sir. I did not notice it particularly, but I think I would have done so had there been anything to notice about him."

"That is a very good answer. How long had you been waiting for me when I arrived?"

"More than an hour, sir."

"So it would not be worth while following him up now, would it? Martin, if you should see that man again, anywhere at all, I wish you would take the trouble to notify me at once, no matter what you are doing. Even if you are on the box of the carriage, you could make an excuse to run into a store and telephone to me."

"Yes, sir."

"Should you say that he is a foreigner, Martin?"

"I should say that all he needed was a turban twisted on his head to make a Hindu out of himself, sir."

"Very likely that is what he is. I almost wish that you had turned about and followed him, but of course you could not think of that, and, besides, he would have known what you were about at once."

"I think so, sir. Do you wish me for anything more, sir?"

"No."

"Then I will go. I thank you very much, sir, for your kindess to me."

Martin had no sooner quitted the house than the detective was called to the telephone, to find that the commissioner was at the other end of the wire.

"Hello, Nick," he said. "There has been another case of robbery by the man with the crystal. Percy Monmouth this time. You know him?"

"Yes."

"He is around at the Imperial now. I told him I would ask you to go right around and see him about it, if I could catch you at home."

"All right. I'll do it. When did this happen?"

"About an hour ago, I think."

"And where?"

"At Twenty-eighth Street and Fifth Avenue."

"That tallies with what Martin told me," thought the detective. Aloud he asked: "How did you know about it so soon?"

"Percy called me up to tell me about it. He will give you all the particulars himself. I haven't many of them. Have you accomplished anything as yet, Nick?"

"No. Only to satisfy myself that the man with the crystal is the guilty party, of course. But we will have to catch him in the act to convict him. It is the sort of thing where circumstantial evidence won't do at all. He must be caught with the goods on—and I don't believe, from what I have found out so far, that he very often has the goods on."

"I don't in the least understand you, Nick."

"I didn't suppose you would. I'll explain it all to you later."

"All right. Run around there and see Percy, will you?"

"Yes, at once."

But before the detective left the house he called Chick to him and said:

"Chick, I want you to rig yourself out as if you were a nabob, and had your pockets stuffed with money. Wear a few diamonds, too, and then go and walk the streets until you find a hawker with a big crystal in front of him. When you do that, walk up and take a good look, first at the man and then at the crystal, and then come back and tell me all about it—only run your man to earth first, for I want to know where to find him. That's all."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERY ABOUT PERCY MONMOUTH.

Percy Monmouth was what might be called a "man about town."

He had no visible means of support, but he was always well "heeled" and wore diamonds, for all that. He was a "good fellow," too, and while he did not live at the Imperial, he made the hotel a sort of headquarters.

Nick, therefore, had no difficulty in finding him at once, as soon as he entered the place; and Monmouth perceiving him at the same time came quickly forward with extended hand.

"The commissioner said he would ask you to look me up," he said. "I suppose he told you about the way I was touched, didn't he?"

"He told me merely that you had been robbed. The particulars I must obtain from you," replied the detective.

"Particulars! Huh! There aren't any particulars, Carter."

"How is that?"

"At least, if there are any I don't know 'em."

"When did it happen?"

"Oh, about two hours ago."

"Corner of Twenty-eighth Street and Fifth Avenue, the commissioner said."

"Near the corner, yes. It was a hundred feet or so this way from it."

"Tell me about it. Tell me just what happened."

"Why, I was coming through the street when a man who was just ahead of me suddenly turned about, and I saw he carried a tripod in his hands. On the top of it was a miscellaneous collection of collar-buttons and such things, but in the midst of them was the handsomest crystal I ever saw. The instant my eyes lit upon it, I was fascinated, for I have a great admiration for such things, you know."

"I didn't know; but go on, Percy."

"I stopped to examine the thing, and bent over toward it a little, I think, but I don't remember that I asked him anything about it, although I know that I intended to do so. I do not know how long I was looking at it, but not more than two or three minutes at the most."

"Well?"

"That's all, practically—that is all for that part of it. There is more of another sort, however."

"Tell me everything, and don't jump about from one thing to another. Tell your story consecutively."

"All right. I left the man standing there in the middle of the sidewalk—I think I put a quarter on his little shelf—and came on here, to the hotel. I had been inside for some time, when Billy Boone came through and stopped where I was sitting.

"'You're a nice one,' he said. 'What's the matter with you, anyhow? Getting too good to speak to people on the street?'

"I asked him what he meant, and he swore that I had passed him—met and passed him, mind you, on Twenty-eighth Street, near Sixth Avenue, half an hour, or nearly that, before, and that although he spoke to me, I would not answer. I told him that I had not been west of Broadway to-day, but it wouldn't go at all. He swore it was me, and I swore it wasn't; and then, all of a sudden, he blurted out:

"'Where's your diamond stud, Percy?'

"I put up my hand to feel for it, and it wasn't there. Then—it was funny I hadn't noticed it before—I found that my ring was missing, also. That led me to make further investigation, with the result that I found I had been touched pretty thoroughly. I hadn't a sou markee in my pocket, and when I started to come here I had fifty dollars. Now, what do you think of that?"

"It is rather odd, isn't it?"

"Odd? Well! Yes, it's deuced odd, if anybody should ask you."

"Is it your idea that the man with the crystal robbed you?"

"No, it isn't, for the reason that he couldn't have done it. He wasn't close enough to me for one thing, and I wasn't there but a minute."

"Then who did?"

"There you've got me. After I came into the hotel I sat down over there and didn't move till after I found I had been robbed."

"Are you sure that you were only a few moments examining that crystal?"

"Of course I am."

"How do you account for the statements of your friend Billy Boone?"

"Oh, it was somebody who looked like me, that's all."

"Did you suggest that idea to him?"

"Sure."

"What did he say to that?"

"Laughed in my face. Scouted the idea that he could be mistaken. Said that it was me, all right, and that I wore my usual clothes and my diamond stud—and that is just where he discovered that I didn't have the stud on; see?"

"Yes."

"Well, we argued the thing for some time, but I couldn't budge him, or he me. I suppose there is a gazabo bumming around town who looks like me. I'd like to see him."

"Where can your friend Boone be found?"

"Probably over at the Holland. Want to see him?"

"Yes; let's walk around there."

Boone was found without trouble, and he reiterated the statements that Monmouth had credited him with.

"There couldn't have been any mistake, Mr. Carter, and that's all there is about it. I know that it was Percy. Maybe he was walking in his sleep, and now that I think of it, he did look a little strange."

"Did you notice where he went?"

"No; only that he crossed Sixth Avenue and seemed to keep on through Twenty-eighth Street. That is a new runway for him, and I thought it strange."

"Did you see him speak to anybody?"

"Yes. Now that you mention it, I did. He joined with a man and walked along beside him, after he crossed the avenue."

"What sort of a looking man was it?"

"A dark-skinned man. To tell you the truth, I thought at the time it was a nigger, and I wondered what Percy was up to—or up against."

"Was that the last you saw of him?"

"Yes; until I met him at the Imperial. He made me sore there, denying that he had met me."

"I have listened very quietly to all this," said Monmouth, speaking now for the first time, "and I want to say here and now that I haven't the slightest recollection of anything of the kind. I haven't been west of Broadway to-day, and I haven't talked with any niggers or walked on the street with one."

"Anyhow," said the detective, smiling, "if you have done either of those things, you do not remember anything about it. Is that the idea?"

"Precisely; and I'd remember it mighty well, if I had. The whole amount of it is that there is a chap around here somewhere who looks like me and who dresses enough like me to have fooled Billy."

"No, no, Percy. I wasn't fooled. I know you, all right all right."

"Well, anyhow, I'm out about five hundred dollars, and that's what's making me sore. Nick, the commissioner said that if anybody could get it back, you could. Do you think you can do it?"

"I don't know. I hope so."

"Well, I can't imagine where you are going to look for it, then. I have no more idea where those things got away from me than the man in the moon."

"It is quite evident to me, Percy," said the detective, "that you were the man who disposed of them yourself. I think you deliberately carried them through Twenty-eighth Street and across Sixth Avenue, where you met a man to whom you gave them; and that man——"

"Hold on there! You're going much too fast, Nick. Do you think I would be such a jolly muttonhead as to go over there and give my diamonds and my wad away to a nigger?"

"Not if you knew what you were doing. As I was saying, the man you gave them to was either the same one who showed you the crystal, or was a confederate of his."

"But what the blazes would I do such a fool thing as that for? Tell me that."

"Because you were probably hypnotized."

"Eh? What's that? Hypnotized? Me? Not much! Nobody could play that bum game on me, and don't you forget it!"

"Your valuables are missing, aren't they?"

"They certainly are, Nick."

"And you don't know how."

"No."

"Then I have offered you the only explanation, Percy. And that man with the crystal has been doing the same sort of thing right along lately."

"Are you giving it to me straight, Nick?"

"I am."

"Say, look here! Do you think, honestly, that such a thing is possible? I would be willing to swear on a stack of Bibles as high as this hotel that I didn't stop there in Twenty-eighth Street in front of that hawker three minutes altogether. Do you suppose that when I did stop he threw me into a hypnotic condition and then sent me over across Sixth Avenue to deliver the goods and waited there till I came back again? Why, I must have been gone almost half an hour."

"And yet it is all possible. In fact, I think it is exactly what occurred."

"You do?"

"Not that he waited there all that time for you, but that he followed along, then hurried ahead of you as soon as you were out of a neighborhood where you were well known. Then, according to a suggestion—or, rather, following out a suggestion he had given you, you turned the valuables over to him and started back again."

"And then what?"

"Then he hurried ahead of you again, took up the same position he had occupied when you stopped to look at the crystal, and when you had assumed the same attitude he brought you to yourself again, and you were none the wiser."

"Well, by the great horn-spoon! I call that robbery made easy. Say, what do you suppose would happen if he should meet Rockefeller in the street? Eh?"

"Rockefeller never carries much money around in his pockets, Percy. Much less than you do, my friend."

"I suppose that's so. He doesn't have to. I do—when I've got it to carry. Just now I'm broke. I say, Nick, let's go out on a still hunt after that fellow."

"Do you think you would recognize him if you should see him again, without the crystal in front of him?" asked the detective, smiling.

"No; I'm blessed if I do."

"That is what I thought."

"All that I remember about him are his eyes. I just peeped into them as I approached the crystal. They were quite remarkable, I think, although I had forgotten all about them."

"But you really do not recall his appearance; eh?"

"No; not at all."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MASTERFUL ROBBER OF MEN.

Nick Carter's next act was to call Mrs. Van Skoyt over the telephone and ask her if she would lend the footman Martin to him for a day or two.

"I have a very important use for him," he told her. "He is the only person I have been able to find who knows by sight the man I am after. I'll send my own Joseph to you to take his place, if you will spare him," he added.

"Oh, I can spare him without depriving you of your man, Mr. Carter," she laughed back at him over the phone. "When do you want him?"

"Right away, if you please. I don't want him in livery."

"Of course not."

"Tell him that he will find me in the café at the Holland House, and to come immediately. I will be very greatly obliged."

All that remained of that afternoon and evening, the detective spent in wandering with Martin at his side through the streets of that particular district where the man with the crystal had been seen oftenest.

They even kept it up till late in the evening, but with no results, and at last the detective directed his steps toward home, telling Martin to accompany him, and that he would house him for the night.

"You are doing detective work now, Martin," he said, "and as such you must stick to the task. Sometimes I work forty-eight or even seventy-two hours at a stretch without rest or sleep—but we won't have to do that in this case. All I desire of you is to help me to recognize that man."

It was nearly ten o'clock when he entered the house, and Chick was awaiting him, looking very crestfallen indeed.

"What's the matter, Chick?" the detective asked. "What has happened to you?"

"I have been made a fool of, that's all," was the reply.

"How did it happen? Eh?"

"I wish I knew—but I don't."

"At least you can tell me about it, can't you?"

"I don't know whether I can or not, Nick. You know what you told me to do? You didn't give me very many particulars, and I went ahead on just what you had said."

"Yes."

"Well, I hadn't been out of the house half an hour before I ran across his nibs directly in front of Wanamaker's store. He was just folding up his tripod and making ready to flit when I saw him, and I didn't see the crystal then; but I had a good idea that it was my man, so I followed him around the corner of Tenth Street and through it to Fourth Avenue."

"Well?"

"He kept on across the avenue to the east side of it, and presently I saw him meet a man, who handed him a little package and some other things that he took out of his pockets. I was too far away to see what they were or to tell what it was all about."

"Go on. This is very interesting."

"I'm glad you find it so."

"I do, decidedly. I'll tell you why in a moment."

"The two parted almost at once, and then the dark-skinned fellow hurried back to the very spot where he was standing when I first spotted him, I following along; and he hadn't been there more than a minute when the very chap that gave him the package around on the avenue came up again and bent over to look at something on the tripod. I was working my way forward as fast as I could, but the man turned away before I got there, and then I caught a glimpse of the crystal."

"Oh, you did, eh?"

"Yes. He was for putting it away, and had it in his hand as I approached, and I called out to him: 'Here, I want to have a look at that.'"

"Well, what did he say to that?"

"He smiled, and replied in perfect English, although I'd swear he is a Hindu: 'Certainly, sir;' and he replaced it on the tripod. Well, here is where the funny part of it comes in."

"Tell me about it."

"I bent over to look at it and stood there for about a minute, I should say. Then I straightened up again—and if you'll believe me, the man and the tripod and the crystal, the whole shooting-match, in fact, had disappeared; evaporated. And that was the last I saw of him. I came home."

"Chick," said the detective, "you saw a robbery committed and you didn't know it."

"Saw a robbery committed?"

"Yes. The man who gave the package and the things out of his pockets to the Hindu was being robbed. He was under hypnotic influence, and in that state he went around the store to Fourth Avenue, met the Hindu, delivered his valuables, then returned to the place where they first met, assumed the same attitude he had been in when he was hypnotized, was restored to his proper condition, and he went away without knowing that he had been robbed, or that he had moved from that spot. That is the whole story."

"Was I hypnotized, too?"

"Assuredly; only you were not robbed—were you?"

"No."

"You see, the Hindu knew that you had seen him accepting the things from the other man. He did not wish to rob you, fearing that it would render you suspicious of the whole affair. He only hypnotized you enough to let him get away, and then he went. While you were bending over looking at that crystal, you only thought you were looking at it. The crystal and the man who uses it so expertly were getting out of your sight about that time."

"Well, he got out of sight, all right. There is no denying that."

"Chick, you had a good chance to get a look at the fellow. Do you think you could recognize him again?"

"Sure. I'd know him, all right."

"Then to-morrow morning get into some disguise. Keep moving all day, and spot him, if you can. When you do, and somehow I think you will, keep him in sight, but don't let him see you. I want to trail him down, if possible."

"So do I, confound him! I don't relish being taken in in that fashion."

In the morning before he left the house the detective called up police headquarters and asked the commissioner if he had heard of another robbery by the man with the crystal.

"No," was the reply. "Why, has there been one?"

"I think so; in the vicinity of Wanamaker's store. I think you will hear about it some time during the day."

"Probably."

Nick set Martin to roaming about the streets in search of the Hindu, and Patsy, who arrived home that morning from the West, was also pressed into the service, being given a description of the fellow, and warned not to get too near his hypnotic power."

But Patsy, like Doctor Parsons, scouted the idea that any one could hypnotize him.

The detective thought this a good opportunity to interview the authority on hypnotism, Doctor Hackenbush, and accordingly went to his office.

"I want to be sure of my premises," he told the doctor, after he had explained the case, "and the principal thing I wish to know is this: Is such a circumstance as I have described possible?"

"Certainly it is possible. Why not?"

"Doctor Parsons denies that it is."

"Aw, Parsons. He is a crank."

"That is precisely what he said about you."

"I have no doubt of it. But I am a progressive crank and he is a stand-still crank. Which do you think is the better way?"

"Yours, I should say."

"Certainly. Now, let me tell you something. You say this man you suspect is undoubtedly a Hindu?"

"Yes."

"The Hindus knew about hypnotism before we ever heard of it. They have been practising it over there for centuries. Their great medium in producing the hypnotic state quickly and easily is a crystal, and the brighter it is the better it serves their purposes. There is something about the lights in the pure crystal that concentrates the gaze and ties the eyes down, to use a homely expression. The minute they are tied down, their owner is that instant at the mercy of the expert hypnotist. He comes instantly under the influence, and will obey any suggestion that is made to him if it is made properly."

"That is what has happened in these cases."

"Precisely."

"Parsons insisted that a man could not go into and come out of the state of hypnotism, or rather the condition, without some knowledge of the fact before or after it."

"That is nonsense. Utter nonsense. If the hypnotist is an expert, and knows his business thoroughly, the subject need have no knowledge of it whatever."

"Do you suppose he could influence me in the same manner, if I should run afoul of him?"

"Undoubtedly—if you looked into the crystal when his eyes were upon you."

"Is there any way in which I could avoid his power?"

"Only one."

"What is that?"

"By keeping your eyes resolutely away from the crystal, although pretending to look at it and by keep-

ing your mind up to a point of resistance every instant."

"Could I fool him in that way?"

"I think so."

"That is what I want to do, if I get the chance."

"That is how I understand you. I would like to meet that man myself."

"I will give you an opportunity, doctor, after I have caught him."

"Do you think you will catch him?"

"I am bound to do it."

"If I could assist you in any way——".

"I can think of no way unless you can make further suggestions for my benefit, and protection."

"No; I think of none. If you follow the directions I have already given you, I am certain you will succeed, all right."

"Thank you."

"But remember, don't look at the crystal itself while his eyes are upon you. If you do, you are a goner."

"I will remember, all right. I am very much obliged to you."

"Oh, that's all right. Don't forget your promise to let me have a chance to see him, after you have caught him."

"I won't."

"Anyhow," thought the detective, "I think I have now got a fairly good idea of the case, and Mr. Hindu won't be much longer at liberty to pursue his trade in the streets of New York. Hello! There is Patsy. Well, my lad, what is there new? Eh?"

"New?" replied Patsy, with supreme disgust. "I'll tell you. I found your Hindu, all right, and he found me, too. He didn't do a thing but pinch everything I've got."

And there was nothing for Nick Carter to do but laugh.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HINDU FINDS TWO VICTIMS.

It was ten o'clock the following morning when Martin, who had started out early in his search, called over the telephone to say that he had located the Hindu—the man with the crystal, and that he was now working around the vicinity of the Siegel-Cooper store, at Sixth Avenue and Eighteenth Street.

The detective was already prepared for just such an event, and it was not two minutes after he received the message before he was hurrying toward the designated place with all speed.

He had to stroll around the neighborhood for some time, however, before he found Martin; and then, almost at the same instant that he saw Martin, he also saw and recognized the man of the crystal, directly across the street.

We use the word recognized advisedly, because Nick realized the instant he did see the man that he would have recognized him at once from the descriptions given.

Just at that moment the fellow was strolling slowly, and with apparent aimlessness, along the street. There was a round roll of something carried under one of his arms, and Nick had no doubt it was the tripod and the other things that went with it.

The detective occupied a few moments in studying the man, and then, just as he was about to cross the street to throw himself in the hypnotist's way, he saw that a victim was already at hand.

He decided then and there that he would wait and watch; that he would permit one victim at least to be robbed, in order that he might post himself thoroughly about the exact methods employed.

It was an interesting thing to watch the maneuvers of the Hindu, whose manner suggested a serpent that is about to charm its victim.

Nick could see the eyes of the man glisten strangely; then his hands quickly removed the green wrapping from the package he carried. The next instant that tripod was open, and to Nick's astonishment, the velvet holder for the collar-buttons and other stuff of the kind, was already fastened to the tripod as were the collar-buttons to the velvet, showing that it was an arrangement carefully made to be handled quickly, and that in reality there was not an article there that could be removed from its place.

The next move the Hindu made was to thrust a hand into his pocket and draw forth another article, this time, Nick had no doubt, the magic crystal.

By that time he had arrived at the corner of the avenue and street and was in such a position that his intended victim was only a few yards from him and still approaching.

The Hindu stopped just in the street off the avenue, and as he did so he flashed the big crystal in the sun so that it sent a ray of light directly into the face of the man he had determined to rob.

The effect was immediate; instantaneous, in fact.

The gentleman whose fate it was to be robbed that

morning turned his head, attracted by that flash of light—and saw the crystal.

Like others who had seen its wonderful facets before him, he fell.

Nick saw him stop stock-still, hesitate an instant, and then turn aside and approach the crystal wonderingly.

The detective saw him bend over it, and then, before three seconds could have passed, he straightened up again and started down Eighteenth Street toward Seventh Avenue at a rapid walk.

And instantly the Hindu closed his "shop," or folded his "tent"—anything you please to the arrangements he had at hand—and after waiting a moment, so that there would be no appearance of haste, he leisurely started down Sixth Avenue again.

This was rather a surprise to the detective for a moment; but then it occurred to him that the hypnotist-robber had instructed his victim to meet him somewhere, pursuing this course instead of following directly after the man.

The detective elected to follow the intended victim rather than the thief, and did so, telling Martin that he could keep somewhere in sight if he chose to do so.

The man who had been selected to be robbed was a tall and portly individual who looked as if he might have come to New York from one of the smaller cities of the State. He looked, too, as if he were well supplied with money, and it was doubtless this air of prosperity he carried about with him that induced the Hindu to select him almost without a second glance.

The man seemed to walk along with a perfectly natural air. In other words, there was nothing about him or his manner to indicate to an observer that he was not entirely rational, and yet Nick was positive that he was going as one asleep, and that afterward he would have no recollection whatever of where he had been.

The intended victim led the way rapidly to Seventh Avenue, and as he approached it Nick could see that he began to search his own pockets, drawing from them article after article which he deposited one by one in the folds of a handkerchief.

The detective did not care to get too close to him, lest the Hindu, when he appeared on the scene, should be made suspicious; but, nevertheless, he could see that the man deposited first a roll of money, then his watch, and other articles, in the folds of the handkerchief, which he afterward tied by the four corners, thus making a compact package of it.

The victim reached the corner of Seventh Avenue and turned southward.

Two-thirds of the way to Seventeenth Street he met the Hindu.

For a moment—just a little bit of a moment it was, too—they stopped, facing each other, and Nick saw the folded and tied handkerchief pass from the stranger to the thief.

Then, apparently without a word, unless indeed the Hindu gave some added suggestions to his victim, they parted.

The man who had been robbed continued on in the direction he had been pursuing, and the thief who had robbed him continued on *his* way to Eighteenth Street, and turned toward Sixth Avenue, heading for the spot where he had been standing when the stranger had first approached him.

The detective let him pass on.

It was his game to watch the man who had been robbed.

He wished to see exactly how it was done, how it was accomplished, and precisely what the victim did from the instant he fell under the influence of the hypnotist until he was released from it.

As soon as the Hindu had passed him, Nick hurried on ahead, and presently, almost running in order to do so, he overtook the victim of the robbery, and walked along by his side for a little distance.

The man seemed not to notice him at all; not to be aware that he was there; and after a moment Nick spoke to him very gently.

"Good morning, sir," he said.

The man did not reply; did not even turn his head; he was apparently oblivious to everything that was going on around him.

"What time is it?" asked the detective, in the same low voice, hoping that the man would make some sign; but he did not, and Nick dropped back again to his former position.

The stranger led the way to Sixth Avenue, and then along it toward Eighteenth Street, to the point where he had first encountered the man with the crystal; and there he was, waiting at the exact spot, although his tripod was not yet open in front of him.

But as the victim approached, the Hindu made ready to receive him.

At the precise moment when the stranger arrived directly in front of the fakir, the tripod was opened, the crystal was placed upon it, and the man who had been robbed leaned forward as if to inspect it.

Then—it could not have been longer than a second

of time—the stranger straightened up, smiled toward the man with the crystal, and turned abruptly away.

Nick signaled to Patsy, who was across on the opposite side of the avenue, to follow the man; and he said to Martin:

"You may go along with Patsy now. I shall not need you."

Already the Hindu was making tracks for another quarter of the city, and Nick did not intend that he should get out of his sight again that day; not once.

Before leaving the house he had directed Chick and Patsy both to remain near him, ready to carry out any directions he should give, and now as he followed along after the Hindu, he knew that Chick was not far away.

The thief seemed to have a definite idea as to where he was going.

He walked rapidly up Sixth Avenue, and did not slacken his pace until he was almost in front of the Macy store, at Thirty-fourth Street.

There he began to move along more slowly, and Nick could see that he was glancing eagerly from side to side and ahead of him, peering into faces that were approaching, and evidently in search of another victim.

He seemed to do this "hunting" at long range, too. That is, he paid no attention to those who were too near him, but looked far ahead, so that, in the event of his selecting one, there would be sufficient time to get his tripod and his crystal into business before the prospective victim could get too close.

There was not a long time to wait for this other victim, either.

The Hindu had not been in the neighborhood more than a quarter of an hour before he made his selection, and this time it was a flashily dressed woman, evidently out for a morning's shopping.

But she had the appearance of one who carried money with her; and not only cash, but she wore diamonds openly, and many of them.

The little bag she carried in her hand bore initials in gold, and looked as if it might contain as well as money articles of value which would be worth the while of the man with the crystal.

Again he maneuvered so that he would meet her in a place exactly suited to his purposes, and this time it was up close to one of the windows of the building, where she had stopped for a moment to look in at the display.

The Hindu approached her, unfolding his tripod as he did so, and presently when she turned to move on toward the entrance of the store, she found herself directly facing it.

Her eyes of course lit upon the blazing crystal, for it did appear to be blazing almost in the sharp rays of the morning sun.

Nick saw that she stopped abruptly; that her eyes fell upon the crystal; that she leaned a trifle forward as if to inspect it more closely.

But it was only for an instant that she did so.

As the other victim had done before her, she straightened up, turned her back, and started away, while instantly the Hindu folded his apparatus and walked as rapidly in the opposite direction.

The woman went toward Thirty-fourth Street, the Hindu toward Thirty-third, and as he had done in the other case, Nick followed the prospective victim.

She walked rapidly, and Nick could see that she opened and closed her little bag several times, as if she were depositing articles within it; articles that the Hindu had given her "suggestions" about before they parted.

As in the other case, this victim walked through to Seventh Avenue and turned south; and she met the Hindu exactly between the two corners.

There they stopped facing each other for a moment, when the woman passed the bag over to the Hindu, and, turning, retraced her steps by the way she had come.

It was a slight change in the former program, but it was the same to all intents and purposes, nevertheless.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCENE AT THE WALDORF.

The modus operandi in this case was precisely the same as in the previous one.

The woman returned to the point where she had first met the Hindu, and encountered him at the exact spot.

The tripod was opened for her, the crystal was displayed, and before she could notice the fact that the bag she had carried in her hand was no longer there—or possibly her not noticing it was a part of the hypnotic plan—she turned away, and entered the great store; and the Hindu lost no time in making himself scarce around that neighborhood.

To Chick the detective spoke rapidly.

"Go after the woman," he said. "Tell her she has been robbed, and to say nothing about it. Assure her

that her property will be recovered. Then get her address. We have got two good witnesses now to support our stories."

"You bet."

"When you have done that, follow me up. I shall keep the Hindu in sight, and I will make chalk arrows whenever he turns a corner or crosses a street."

"The fellow has a perfect sinecure," was Nick Carter's thought as he again started after the man with the crystal. "There is nothing to prevent him from carrying on his trade directly in the open, and that without attracting the least attention; and there is positively no way in which one of his victims could connect him with their loss, even if they should encounter him again."

The thief was now evidently bent upon playing for even higher game, for he made his way directly toward Fifth Avenue, along Thirty-fourth Street, and, to Nick Carter's surprise, he walked boldly into the Waldorf-Astoria, at the entrance which is down near Astor Court.

Nick followed him inside.

The Hindu strolled through the corridor until he was near the desk, and the detective saw that now he was to witness the adoption of a slight change in the plan of procedure.

The man dropped upon one of the seats along the corridor, and sat there with his burning eyes—magic eyes, Nick called them in his mind—glancing incessantly from face to face, as men shuttled either way along that interior thoroughfare.

The tripod, wrapped in its green case, was laid across his knees; but resting upon it, half-concealed by the Hindu's hands, and wholly wrapped in a dark cloth, was a round object, which Nick knew to be the crystal.

Presently a pompous individual, of the "I've-got-money-and-want-you-to-know-it" type, approached him along the corridor, and Nick saw the greedy eyes of the man with the crystal as they watched him eagerly.

It was really a spectacle, this gloating over the coming misfortunes of a prospective victim. It suggested the serpent that is preparing to charm the unwary mouse or rabbit that is destined for its food.

The man approached nearer. He was walking slowly, and glancing from side to side, not with the appearance of seeking any person in particular, but with the air of one who wished that all others near him should see and acknowledge his grandeur.

He was not the sort of man that one can be very sorry for when he is robbed, for he invites that sort of thing. He was of the species that is a walking temptation and invitation to all thieves—and there are many such on the streets of New York every day of the year.

He carried a large gold-headed cane. The diamond in his tie was four karats at least. The watch-chain across his waistcoat was large and heavy, and suggested that the watch attached to it was a valuable one.

A diamond, even larger than the one in his tie, glistened from his hand, and there was evidently an exceedingly plethoric pocketbook somewhere about his person. He was the sort that would carry a pocketbook in order to make a display when it became necessary to open it.

Nick watched the Hindu as the man approached him.

He saw the eager eyes glisten with avarice. He could see the fingers that grasped the crystal on his lap tremble with impatience when the man paused for an instant to speak to a person who was passing him.

Then the "great" man strode onward again, and presently came within a few feet of the man with the crystal.

Instantly the black covering fell away from it.

Instantly its glittering facets were exposed to view, and as instantly they attracted the gaze of the prospective victim.

He stopped so abruptly that it seemed almost as if some one had halted him.

He turned his eyes toward the crystal, then stepped forward and bent toward it.

But not more than one second of time.

The strange and magic jewel was as instantly covered; the Hindu seemed to whisper only one or two words to the pompous man; then he rose and strolled through the corridor, while the pompous individual turned and followed him.

They went together to the same exit where the Hindu had entered the hotel, and there the Hindu waited until the other had approached quite near.

Nick could see then that the fellow spoke several long sentences in the big man's ear, and having done so, he turned away and passed again among the crowd in the corridors.

The victim? He stood where he was for a moment, then turned slowly about and also retraced his steps.

But this time he did not look either to the right or the left. This time he was not seeking admiration.

He plodded forward with all thought of pride lost in the forgetfulness that had sway over him.

The detective followed, and saw him pass out of the hotel at the Thirty-third Street exit, and after that he turned toward Fifth Avenue, crossed it, kept on through Thirty-third Street across Madison, turned toward Thirty-fourth Street through Madison Avenue, and there, midway along the block, met face to face with the Hindu again, who turned and walked along at his side.

Nick drew a trifle nearer to them.

He could see that, as they walked, the pompous individual was busily engaged in passing articles into the hands of the man beside him, each of which the Hindu put in his pockets as fast as he received them.

The detective could not see what those articles were, only he had no doubt about the matter at all.

He knew that they would include all the money the man had about him, both the diamonds that had been so plainly in evidence, the watch and heavy chain, and possibly many other valuables that might not have been so ostentatiously in sight as the others were.

They continued to walk along in this manner as far as Thirty-fifth Street, and there, at the corner, they came to a stop.

Nick could see that the Hindu was talking rapidly to the man, and then they parted.

The man who had been robbed continued on his way, passing through Thirty-fifth Street toward Fifth Avenue and the hotel, and the Hindu came straight down Madison Avenue and turned through Thirty-fourth Street toward the hotel.

Nick, as he had done in the preceding cases, followed after the victim—and in that way received one of the surprises of his life.

The victim went directly to the hotel.

He entered it and passed along the corridor to the exact spot where he had encountered the man with the crystal, stopped there, and then seemed to look in stupefied amazement at the man who now occupied the chair where the Hindu had been seated—only now the Hindu was not in evidence. He was nowhere to be seen.

The pompous individual stared at the stranger in the chair for a moment, while Nick Carter drew nearer in order to hear what was said.

After a moment the victim of the robbery spoke.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but did you not just now have a wonderful crystal on your knees? I was sure I saw one here."

The man in the chair stared.

"No, sir," he replied, "I did not."

"Extraordinary! Very extraordinary! I could have sworn, sir, that I stopped here and turned half-about to look at a crystal I saw on your knees."

"I reckon, old chap, that you've taken about three too many this morning, haven't you?" asked the stranger in the chair.

"Sir, do you mean to insinuate that I'm drunk?" demanded the pompous man.

"Not at all; not at all, sir. Only the strangeness of your question made me think that possibly you might have been in that condition last night, and had taken too many bracers this morning."

"Humph!" the man snorted. Then he turned away.

As he did so, he felt for his watch, no doubt a habit of his, and he stopped short in his tracks.

He searched in both waistcoat pockets; he clapped his hand against his trousers pocket where undoubtedly he was in the habit of carrying his wallet. He held up one hand and gazed upon the naked finger where the diamond ring had been. He raised the other hand to his tie, where the diamond pin had been—and then he let out a yell that rang through the corridor of the hotel, startling everybody who heard it.

"I've been robbed! Robbed!" he yelled.

And as he shouted the information so that everybody might hear it, he turned again and pounced upon the man in the chair, with whom he had been talking, seizing him by the shoulders and crying out with all the strength of his lungs:

"Thief! Thief! Thief!"

One can imagine the confusion without its being described here.

The man who was charged with the theft leaped to his feet, drew back his fist, and planted it firmly and strongly straight between the eyes of the pompous individual, who staggered backward, but without losing his feet.

In the meantime the hotel detectives and other attendants about the place had rushed forward, and now they seized upon the robbed and the supposed robber, and bore them away toward the private office.

It was right here that Nick Carter put in a word.

He happened to see one of the assistant managers of the hotel, whom he knew, approaching the spot, and he stopped him.

"Hello, Nick," said the assistant manager. "What's doing here?"

"The old party with the waistcoat has been robbed," said Nick rapidly. "I saw it all, and I happen to know that the man whom he has charged with the theft

knows nothing about it. Go and see if you can set matters straight for him, and also tell the old party that he will get his things back all right. Does he stop here?"

"Yes."

"I will want him as a witness. I can't stop longer now. Will you look out for the poor chap who is called a thief, and isn't?"

"Sure. What time will you be back?"

"As soon as possible. I can't exactly say."

He hurried toward the exit then, realizing that the Hindu had stolen a march on him, and had doubtless disappeared for the rest of the day.

CHAPTER XI.

NICK CARTER APPLIES THE TEST.

As the detective hurried toward the exit, to make his way out of the hotel, he heard his own name called loudly by one of the hall-boys, who was at that instant starting away from his desk with a message.

"Here!" he called to him; and was handed a hastily scrawled note in the handwriting of Chick.

Opening it, he read:

"Come to the Holland House. C."

He lost no time in complying, you may be sure.

He realized all in an instant that Chick had followed his chalk arrows made on the pavement, as far as the Waldorf, and having lost them there, had searched about for some indication of Nick's presence there, or for the Hindu.

Doubtless he had encountered the Hindu somewhere outside, after he had robbed the pompous party, and had trailed him to the Holland, where no doubt the man would enact about the same sort of thing that had already happened at the Waldorf.

When he arrived at the Holland, he went at once to the café, and there, seated where he was not attracting much attention, was the Hindu, awaiting another victim.

His position and his attitude were exactly the same as those he had adopted at the Waldorf, and Nick knew that it would not be long before he would select another victim for his arts and wiles.

Chick was near the door, and Nick spoke to him.

"I'm going to disappear long enough to make some alterations in my appearance," he said. "I'll come back in a moment in my own proper person, but with enough jewels on me to attract even the eyes of that thief. Keep watch while I'm gone."

He was absent only a few minutes, but even when he returned, Chick was already moving toward the outer door after a gentleman who was leaving the place. The Hindu was nowhere to be seen.

"By Jove," thought the detective, as he followed quickly after Nick, "the fellow is losing no time this morning. I shouldn't wonder at all if he intends this to be his last day, and is making as big a haul as possible preparatory to leaving the city for other pastures to work out. That is about the size of it."

"Well?" he asked as he overtook his assistant.

"He has snared his bird," was the laconic response. "Shall we let him work this one out, or shall we arrest him?"

"We'll wait a little longer. I'll see about it."

"It strikes me that we have got about all the evidence we want, haven't we?"

"Yes, and no. There is one other bit of evidence I want, and very badly."

"What is that?"

"I want him to rob me. I want to catch him in the act."

"Do you think it can be done?"

"I am sure of it."

"All right. What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to see this thing out. You watch the victim this time, and after he has given up his valuables, find out who he is."

"All right."

"I will stick to the Hindu."

"Anything more?"

"Yes. I don't want you to lose sight of us if you can help it; if you can, find out who that victim is, after he is robbed, and do it quickly enough so that you can keep me in your sight."

"I'll try it."

"I think I know how to fool him and his hypnotism. At any rate, I shall try."

"Good."

"I want you to watch everything that happens between us, when he selects me. I will walk away and go to meet him, just as the others have done, that we have watched."

"Yes."

"And I will give up to him, just the same. I will pass over to him everything that I have got about me that is valuable—and then, when he has accepted them and stowed them away in his pockets, I shall grab him."

"I'm on."

"If I don't grab him, you will know that I am actually hypnotised myself, and it will be your cue to rush in and do the grabbing, then and there."

"And if you do grab him——"

"Well, you might rush in anyhow. I imagine the fellow is slippery, and he might make a very good effort at getting away. We have got him now where we want him, if we work the rest of it out right."

"That's so, Nick."

They had been following the prospective victim all this time they were talking, but now Nick dropped back to the rear where he could keep out of sight when the victim and the thief should meet.

Meet they did a few moments later, and again the same operations were gone through with that Nick had already witnessed three separate times that day.

The man met the thief, stopped and talked with him, gave up his valuables, and hurried onward, as if in great haste.

For a moment after that the Hindu stood gazing after him with a strange smile on his face and in his wonderful eyes, and then he turned abruptly around and walked down the avenue—it was Madison—toward the Square.

Nick, toward whom he did not glance, remained where he was until the Hindu was more than a block ahead of him, and then, after making a chalk arrow on the pavement, he followed.

The Hindu did not hasten. He evidently believed that he had oceans of time for what he still wished to do, and Nick found no difficulty in keeping him plainly in sight.

The fellow turned across the square toward the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and Nick made another chalk mark, pointing that way.

A few moments later they both entered the Fifth Avenue by the Broadway entrance, and the Hindu, following out his previous plans, seated himself for a moment on one of the red plush seats near the door.

But he waited a long time without seeing anybody who looked as if he might be a victim.

Nick was purposely waiting until Chick would have a chance to arrive there, after following the last victim back to the Holland.

Suddenly the Hindu left his seat—just as Chick entered at the front door, it happened—and made his way toward the café, Nick following.

In the café the thief chose a seat that was near the door through which most of the patrons passed in and out of the place, and Nick dropped down at a table near him.

Then, ostentatiously, the detective called a waiter to him and ordered a cigar; and, as he did so, displayed a huge roll of money that he took from his pocket.

He was glancing furtively toward the Hindu as he did so, and he saw the man start at the size of the roll, and knew that he was already satisfied as to who his next victim should be.

That was precisely what the detective wanted.

Now he could take his time, for the Hindu would not devote his attentions to any other person until he had "accumulated" that particular roll.

It was a very pretty game indeed that the detective was playing—if only it could be made to succeed.

But Nick knew that Chick was within a few feet of him, watching, and that even if he should fall under the influence of the hypnotic power, Chick would not do so, and the arrest would happen just the same.

But Nick did not believe that he could be made a victim of hypnotism, under the circumstances.

Being thoroughly posted, and forewarned of what was intended to happen, he could combat it, and by bearing in mind the advice given him by Doctor Hackenbush, he would resolutely keep his eyes away from the magic crystal.

Once he glanced around to discover if Chick was in his place near him, and seeing that he was, Nick lighted the cigar that had been brought to him, stretched himself and yawned, and then he slowly rose to his feet, facing the Hindu, but not glancing at him.

Still, he saw as he rose, a movement of the Hindu's arms and fingers.

He knew that the fellow was in the act of removing the black covering from the crystal already on his

knees in front of him, and he decided that the time had come for the experiment.

He kept his eyes resolutely six inches above the crystal, and then, fearing that the Hindu might discover that they were not directed exactly right, he dropped them to a point a foot below it; and turned suddenly, facing the fellow, and stopped.

Instantly he heard the soft tones of the Hindu murmuring:

"You are to obey everything I tell you to do."

There was a slight pause as if to give weight to the words, and then the soft tones continued:

"Pass out of the hotel by the Twenty-fourth Street exit. Walk slowly toward Sixth Avenue. As you go, after you are outside of the hotel, wrap that money you have in your handkerchief, put your watch and all your jewelry with it, tie the corners together, and when you meet a man who says, 'It is well, my friend,' give him the handkerchief you have tied together. Go."

Nick turned about obediently, as he had seen other victims do before that day, and made his way toward the Twenty-third Street entrance.

He had successfully stood the test to which he had applied himself, although even so, he could not deny that he had felt strangely influenced by the words and near presence of the man.

He realized that without the warning and the directions he had received from Doctor Hackenbush, he too must have fallen a victim to the hypnotic influence, so strange and terrible a power did it exert.

But the moment he was away from the hypnotist, the feeling left him, and he was as powerfully in possession of his senses as he ever had been.

He realized that the case was practically won now. That it was only a question of a few minutes before he would seize upon the thief and hold him, and the mysterious robberies would all be explained.

In that moment he thought, with a smile, of Doctor Parsons, to whom there would now be proof that he had been hypnotized; and he thought again of the two kinds of cranks that the other doctor had described, deciding that he believed in Hackenbush's sort rather than the other, as typified by Parsons.

As soon as he was on the street, he obediently set to work arranging his valuables and money as the Hindu had directed him to do, walking onward the while, and conscious that the man of the crystal could not be far away.

Presently, as he approached Sixth Avenue, he saw the Hindu coming, but he made no sign that he did so, of course.

He realized that now the crucial moment had arrived, and that the denouement was near.

And so they drew nearer and nearer together, with Chick somewhere about, closely observant of everything.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTURE.

When he came face to face with the Hindu he stopped exactly as he had seen the other victims do, and instantly, when the words were uttered that the Hindu had told him about, he passed over the handkerchief he had prepared.

It was his duty to turn away at once then, and to go in the opposite direction, for so the thief told him to do.

But he did not do any such thing.

Instead, he stood perfectly still for an instant, and then as the Hindu, seemingly astonished, repeated the order, Nick shot his fist out, caught the man, who dodged quickly, a glancing blow at the side of the head, and sent him whirling backward.

But the man did not fall.

He seemed wonderfully agile, and he evidently realized on the instant that he had played his game of stealing once too often.

As he staggered backward he turned, and instantly broke into a run down the street toward Sixth Avenue.

He ran like a deer, too, with Nick and Chick in full pursuit.

It is not, however, always the longest legs that can run the fastest; in fact, it is rarely so, and Nick Carter was a sprinter of the first order at that time, as he is now.

The Hindu leaped across Sixth Avenue in a few bounds, and, strangely enough, instead of turning and darting through the throngs of people on the avenue, kept on past Koster & Bial's, down the street, toward Seventh Avenue.

Nick determined then that the fellow was making for some house on that street, through which or into which he hoped to escape.

Once he thought of taking a snap shot at him and bringing him down with a bullet in his leg; but he disliked to do that if the fellow could be caught without it.

Half-way between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, the Hindu suddenly turned across the street, and, darting into an areaway, disappeared into the basement of a house, where the door was evidently opened as he approached it, for he gave out a strange warning cry as he ran.

But by this time the detective was only a few feet in the rear, and he threw himself against the door bodily, almost as soon as the thief had passed through. There had not been time evidently for those inside to lock the door before the detective reached it, and it flew open when he threw himself against it.

Already there were the disappearing figures up the stairway toward the parlor floor, and Nick rushed forward.

As he reached the stairs there was a flash and a loud report from the top of them, and a bullet whizzed past the detective's head, but without touching him.

A second report followed, and Nick felt the sting of the bullet as it grazed his arm.

But unmindful of these things, he dashed on up the stairway toward the top, and reached it in time to see the front door of the house open, and his man, followed by another who had evidently been waiting in the house, dash out through the dorway, upon the front steps.

Nick leaped after them.

As he dashed outside, he saw Chick running toward them, but still fifty yards, at least, in the distance.

The two Hindus turned now toward Seventh Avenue, but neither of them could run as fast as the detective, and the man who had been waiting inside the house was not as good a runner as the hypnotic thief.

Nick Carter overtook this man rapidly, and as soon as he was within arm's length of him, he struck out again with that terrible fist of his, and sent him rolling into the gutter.

The detective did not even turn his head to see what the other results of the blow had been, but dashed onward, gaining upon the thief with every stride.

He watched him narrowly all the time to see that he did not throw away his booty; but evidently the thief had no such thought as that, for he did not attempt it.

They reached Seventh Avenue and crossed it with Nick Carter only about twenty paces in the rear.

But there, on the other side of the avenue, just after they had passed the corner, the Hindu stopped and turned at bay; and as he did so, he drew from some place of concealment a weapon the sight of which the detective knew only too well.

It was a "strangler's cord"—a terrible weapon indeed in the hands of a man who knows how to use it.

As Nick ran on, the strangler leaped toward him.

Nick made an effort to strike the man with his fist, but the Hindu dodged it, and the very next instant Nick felt the pressure of the terrible cord against his throat.

Realizing that it was with him a case of instant action or none at all, Nick reached up his own hands and seized the man by the throat, shutting down the terrible grip of his fingers with all his great strength, and driving the breath back into the lungs of the man.

They were thus, one with a cord around his throat, and the other with Nick Carter's fingers gripping his, when Chick arrived on the scene.

He came up on the run, and as he reached the spot, his fist shot out with a terrible blow, catching the Hindu directly under the ear, and sending him reeling backward, so that he loosened his hold on the cord, and dropped it.

Before he could recover from the effects of that blow, he received a second one from the same hand, and this one sent him sprawling.

But the man was possessed of wonderful vitality as well as agility and strength.

He bounded to his feet almost as soon as he touched the pavement, and turned again to run.

A third blow from Chick's fist caught him and sent him staggering again, and then Nick Carter leaped forward and sent in one of his own master strokes.

His caught the thief on the point of the chin.

It lifted him clear of the pavement, and sent him hurling backward as if he had been shot out of a gun, and he landed on his back on the sidewalk and lay there, quivering like a bullock struck by an ax.

"Go back for the other one, Chick," ordered the detective, and he bent forward to examine his captive.

After one glance upon him, the detective smiled, and shook his head.

"I would never have suspected that," he mused; though just what it was that he had discovered did not at the moment appear.

He motioned to a policeman who had been attracted by the disturbance, told him who he was, and directed that a patrol-wagon be sent for at once.

"This prisoner, with all due respect to your captain, must go directly to headquarters," he said. "As soon as you have ordered the patrol-wagon, call up headquarters and ask them to tell the commissioner that I have got the Crystal thief, and am taking him down there at once. Will you do all that?"

"Yes, sir."

Nick snapped the handcuffs upon his prisoner, who was still unconscious; then he felt in his pockets, and discovered that they were filled almost to overflowing with the plunder he had gathered in that morning.

"It's a good catch; we've got plenty of witnesses, and he is caught with the goods on him, all right," was his mental comment.

At that moment Chick came up leading the other prisoner, who was still dazed.

"You laid him out all right, Nick," he said to his chief. "He was just coming around when I got back there after him. A crowd had collected, and he was trying to explain to them, believing that we had gone on without him. I don't suppose we want him much, anyway, do we?"

"Only as an accomplice. Have you looked closely at him?"

"No."

"Do so, and see if you recognize him. These chaps are not Hindus. They are only made up to represent them. The Hindu business is a disguise. Take a look at the thief himself."

Chick did so, and then turned to Nick with an expression of amazement.

"Why," he said, "it's that Prince Danton, who has been cutting so much ice in society here in New York lately."

"Correct," replied the detective. "And this is his manner of providing himself with funds for his splurge."

"He stops at the Mammoth. Has a suite of rooms there."

"Correct again. I fancy that the commissioner will be astonished."

"So do I."

"Here is the patrol, Chick. Help me to get this fellow into it.

At police headquarters, a little later, the commissioner and Nick sat alone.

"We have exposed one more bogus lord, only this time it is a 'prince,'" said the detective. "He has been doing quite a stunt in society here, and this is how he got the cash to do it with; eh?"

"Exactly."

"And I think I have heard that he is about to marry the daughter of Vanderdyken. Is that right?"

"I have heard so."

"Poor little Marguerite. It will be a hard blow for her."

"Yes; but fancy what it would have been had she married him."

"Well, anyhow, the mystery of the magic eye and the wonderful crystal is solved. Say, but that fellow must be a remarkable hypnotist."

"He certainly is. That's so."

THE END.

The next number (596) will be "A Battle of Wit and Skill; or, Nick Carter Meets With Defiance."

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TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

The recent man-catching contests in Paris have called attention to a little-known feature of the French police force—the employment of dogs in capturing criminals. Those of us who were not aware of the fact before now know that the Parisian *gens d'armes* in certain districts of the French capital make their rounds accompanied by four-footed allies. And very useful indeed have these dogs proved. They have gone far to solve a problem which has long perplexed the mind of the Prefect of Police, the problem of how to cope with the most serious forms of crime in the city.

The visitor to Paris who happens to be in the quarters known as La Villette, Vaugirard, Ménilmontant, and Grenelle after dark has need to walk warily. Whether he knows it or not, he is in the home of the Apache, that French ruffian who is own brother to the Western savage whose name he has appropriated. Our own toughs are bad enough, but the Apache of Paris outdoes them all as a desperate criminal. It is his delight to go about armed with knife, revolver, sandbag, loaded stick, and any other choice weapons that may commend itself to him, and woe to the unfortunate traveler who crosses his path when he is seeking a victim!

At what precise time the Apaches, so called, sprang into existence is not quite clear. Paris, like every other big city, has always had its bad characters, but it is only of late years that its hooligan bands have taken to themselves this significant title and vied with each other in making it notorious.

That the French police have their hands full in certain quarters of Paris will be understood. They have need to be always on the alert. Fresh methods of vigilance must frequently be devised, and this explains how of late years they have tried a new means of combating the Apache on his own ground, how our friend the dog has been impressed into the service—sworn in, in fact, as a special constable.

It is Belgium, however, which claims the distinction of this innovation. Monsieur Van Wesemael, the chief of police at Ghent, was the first to employ dogs in the capacity of criminal-hunters, and when he had demonstrated their utility his brother officers in various parts of the country were quick to imitate him. The result is that throughout Belgium midnight assaults have greatly diminished in number, Street ruffians have a wholesome dread of the teeth of their new enemies, and they know, too, that it is difficult to get away from the dogs. Even the revolver does not help them. It is by no means easy to hit an animal while it is leaping upon you, an animal that is of no great size.

A police section near Paris which possesses some of the most highly trained of these dogs is Neuilly-sur-Seine. Monsieur Simard, the commissary in charge there, having interested himself in the matter, went to Groenendael, in Belgium, a place which furnishes a race of dogs—wolf-hounds—noted for their special aptitude in this respect. He took back with him three dogs, named "Duke," "Black," and "Joh." The new recruits were then put through the customary course of training, the details of which are particularly interesting.

A policeman is dressed up in rough clothes as an Apache. The dogs, who are held in leash, are then let loose at the word "attack," and urged on to hunt down and seize their quarry. As a matter of precaution they are muzzled, but, although they cannot use their teeth, they manage to considerably embarrass their victim at close quarters. One of the tricks they are taught is to twine themselves in the legs of the escaping man and throw him to the ground. This effected, they can pin him down and stand guard over him until their masters arrive on the scene.

When on active service, after their training has been finished, the dogs, of course, are permitted to use their teeth. They still wear little muzzles as they trot along by the side of the *gens d'armes*, for the wily Apache is always ready with poisoned meat in the hope of tempting his four-footed enemies to eat, and though the dogs are trained never to touch food outside their kennels, there is no knowing when one of them might stray from the path of virtue at sight of a tempting morsel. The muzzle in question, however, is of special design, and can be released by a flip of the thumb on the alarm being given, when it hangs suspended from the animal's collar.

As the Apache, on being pursued, generally makes for the shelter of some house, the police dogs are further trained to leap through windows, holes in the wall, and so on, often at some distance from the ground. In the Paris competitions, the dog who carried off first prize for this feat jumped a fence eight feet high, and cornered his victim on the roof of a shed.

The newest practise is to garb the dogs in wadded jackets which are made as far as possible knife and bullet-proof. Although a revolver-shot may miss its mark, the Apache as a rule has his knife—and an ugly one at that—to fall back upon. The Apache, too, has learned that firing a revolver only infuriates the dogs the more. At the sound of the shots the animals seem goaded to madness. They spring at the man's throat, and once they have succeeded in dragging their victim to earth worry him as they would a wolf.

Down by the riverside of Paris are to be seen other members of the canine police force—the life-saving dogs of the

Seine. These are big Newfoundlands, who come to the rescue of unfortunate people who have fallen into the river; but they, too, are employed in hunting out thieves and desperadoes who lurk about the quays, and most useful service do they perform. There is no doubt indeed that P. C. Dog has become an institution in Paris as well as in the large cities of Belgium. May he have a long career of usefulness before him!

Several have recently been brought over for use in New York.

The "rechristener" is the professional name of the man who alters the names and numbers on stolen watches. The rechristener is usually a clever engraver who, through drink or otherwise, has lost the chance of obtaining honest employment, and aids the receiver of stolen property.

When a watch has been stolen the number or name or other indication of make or ownership may be forwarded to the police, and by them communicated to pawnbrokers. There is consequently an element of risk in attempting to dispose of it. There are various ways of getting over the difficulty, and rechristening is one that is frequently resorted to. The engraver adds or prefixes another figure to the number, or he turns the name "J. Robins" into "T. J. Robinson," the extra initial serving to make the name look level and central on the watch-case.

This is done very cleverly, and the rest of the letters or figures are touched up to make all appear to have been cut at the same time. But the dodge is likely to drop out of practise, as pawnbrokers are "up" to it, and are shy of taking any watch that in any way resembles the description.

A clever piece of swindling was recently performed at a New York hotel. A gentleman of some wealth met a struggling young actor, and, knowing that things were not well with him, invited him to dinner. Having enjoyed a nice little meal, the host was dismayed to find that, with the exception of a quarter or two, he had left home minus money. Nothing remained but to "own up" to the situation, and the matter was set forth to the manager. He, regarding it as another attempt at fraud, threatened to send for an officer. At this juncture a portly, pleasant-looking old gentleman stepped up to the disputants, and, addressing the manager, asked him how he dared to conduct himself in so insolent and brutal a manner.

"Here," he added, as he took a $100 note from a bulky letter-case and held it out, "take this; deduct the amount of this gentleman's bill and give me the change. I am confident that this is simply an awkward accident."

The manager apologized and did as commanded. Outside the hotel the gentleman thus befriended requested the address of his unknown benefactor.

"That's all right," responded the good Samaritan as he slipped into a cab. "I've been trying to pass that bill all day; it's a bad one."

To steal bracelets, diamonds, and other valuables with the interesting accompaniment of beer, cigars, and spirits, from a theater where "The Ticket-of-Leave Man" was being played, betokens a grim, if somewhat daring, humor.

The English murderer and burglar, Peace, was as cool a customer in a stranger's house at midnight as he might have been in his own at midday. He is reported to have effected a very cute witticism in one place. He had ransacked the rooms and was leaving the last bedroom, in which the eldest daughter was quietly sleeping, when Peace's eyes caught sight of a motto on the wall, "Peace be unto this house." The joke was too good to be missed. In a corner of the room was a lady's writing-case, and in it the burglar found pen and ink. Reaching down the illuminated card, he quickly altered the wording to "Peace has been unto this house." Then he crept out of the room and made good his escape.

Another midnight visitor left a letter on the mantelpiece of the dining-room, in which he informed the owner that he was able-bodied and full of life and fun; that, as an evidence of this, he had made free with the boiled ham, though in charity he had left enough for their breakfast. He was sorry, he said, they had not thought of leaving their money for him, but he would have it next time he came. He further expressed his love for the daughter, his intentions being matrimonial. Nothing stronger than tea having been left him and his mate, they had had to keep themselves warm by a boxing-bout and a jig. They hoped this would not be necessary when they came again.

THE DIVER'S FATE.

BY ROGER STARBUCK.

The bark *Warrentown* lay becalmed off the coast of Brazil. The sky was cloudless, and the warm sun, gleaming down upon the vessel's decks, heated them so that they blistered the feet of such of the men as were barefooted.

The officers had erected awnings above the quarter-deck to protect them from the scorching rays; but the foremast hands, having no spare canvas, were obliged to shelter themselves as best they could in the shadows of the try-works and foresail.

Suddenly Tom Merrick, one of the harpooners, was heard proclaiming that he had obtained permission from the captain for all hands to bathe in the sea. The good news was received with a cheer, and soon the men on all sides were seen preparing for a swim.

One of them, however—a little tar, with an old face and queer, bandy legs—after having thrown off his jacket, was observed to put it on again, and at the same time to give his head a quick negative shake.

"Halloa, Thrugg, what's the matter?" inquired one of his shipmates. "Ain't you going to join us, after all?"

"No. I was a-going to, when I happened to think of the dream which I had t'other night."

"What was that?"

"Why, I dreamed, d'ye see, that I was a-leaning over the rail, a-looking down upon my own corpse, which was a-floating, face upward, past the ship."

"Nonsense, it was only a dream. I have had a thou-

sand such, and not one of 'em has ever come to pass. So hurry up, snail, and get ready for a dive; I've heard that you are one of the best divers in the ship, and, as I've never seen ye perform, I shall be mightily disappointed if you don't do so now. You'll feel all the better for it, beside which you may not have another opportunity during the rest of the voyage."

Thrugg, however, shook his head.

"The dream is haunting me yet, d'ye see, and something seems to warn me not to go into the water. I don't like to go against a warning voice."

"Superstitious!" cried the other, laughing. "You're foolish to let such ideas run away with you. Hows'ever, if you don't want to go in, it's all right. I have nothing more to say."

At that moment, the captain came forward, smiling and whistling good-humoredly.

"I hear we've got a second Sam Patch on board!" he exclaimed. "Where is he?"

Instantly half a dozen fingers were pointed toward Thrugg, who took off his cap and bowed.

"How is this, Thrugg—ain't you going in?" inquired the skipper.

"No, sir; t'other night I had a dream which——"

"Avast, there!" interrupted the captain. "You needn't spin me any of your yarns about dreams, for I ain't superstitious, and so I don't believe in anything of that sort. D'ye see that?"

And he pulled a guinea from his pocket, and held it up between his thumb and forefinger.

The eyes of the little old tar sparkled as he gazed at the coin.

"It's a bright piece," said he, "and—and——"

"It's yours!" broke forth the captain—"that is, provided you promise to dive for it, and get it if I throw it overboard! As I don't wish to throw away such a valuable piece of money, however, you must tell me, truthfully, whether you will be able to get hold of it or not in case——"

"Aye, aye," interrupted Thrugg, as he threw off his jacket. "Try me, and you shall see how quick I'll bring back that guinea after you fling it into the sea."

Soon he was perched upon the rail ready to dive. His eyes twinkled like those of a locust; his face rippled with smiles. Avarice, which in him was very strong, had got the better of his presentiment.

"Now, then, here goes!" cried the captain, and the glittering coin was tossed over the knightheads into the sea.

With a wild cry of joy, Thrugg dove after it. The water closed over him, and the men, perched upon the rail, were watching for his reappearance, when suddenly a fat porpoise was seen gliding along toward the bow.

"Bring me an iron!" shouted the first mate. "Quick—we will settle this fellow's hash for him in a short time. Stand by to haul!"

There was an iron upon the forehatch; one of the men picked it up, and gave it to the first officer.

He fastened the end of the jib down-haul to it, then sprang upon the guy, and stood ready to dart.

He did not have to wait long. The porpoise soon glided beneath him, and with a whizzing, rushing noise, the harpoon clove the air. The fish dove, making a great flurry, and the mate sprang to the deck.

"I've struck him!" he exclaimed. "Haul! haul in, men! Lively, lively, if you want porpoise-balls for supper!"

The men pulled upon the rope with a will; but the captain, who was perched upon the knightheads, saw nothing of the fish.

Shouting and singing, however, the men still continued to pull upon the rope.

"D'ye see him yet, sir?" inquired the mate.

"No," answered the captain; "and, what's more, I take but little interest in your porpoise; I'm watching for Thrugg, who ought to be up by this time on the other side of the bow."

"Haul away, lads!" cried the first officer, now jumping upon the knightheads—"haul away!"

"Aye, aye," was the response, while several of the seamen declared that they had never before had so much difficulty in pulling up a porpoise that was struck.

"It's certainly a heavy fish," cried Tom Merrick, the harpooner. "I think it's high time the creature was above water. Do you see anything of it yet, sir?" he continued, turning to the mate.

"No, not yet; but—aye, aye! I see something black! It's a-coming up! Pull away—pull with a will, and you'll soon have the fish out of water."

The tars exerted themselves manfully; the dark object became more distinct every moment; soon, to his horror, the mate was enabled to make out a human head and arm.

A minute later the men gave the rope a sudden, powerful jerk, when up came the body of poor Thrugg.

The old sailor was quite dead; for the harpoon darted by the first officer had missed the fish and passed through the stomach of the diver, who, while under water, had, unfortunately, swam from one side of the bow to the other.

Now, then, dangling from the rope, with the sharp instrument projecting a foot beyond his back, with his fixed, staring eyes turned upward, and streams of blood trickling down his body, he presented such a spectacle as the horror-stricken crew hoped they might never see again.

The corpse was hauled on board, and tightly clutched between the fingers of the right hand the captain found his guinea, which, even in his death-struggles, the doomed sailor had still retained.

"Poor Thrugg!" muttered the skipper. "He has got the money, but it's no use to him now," and he turned aside his head to wipe a tear from his weather-beaten cheek.

"God have mercy on his soul!" groaned the mate—"and on mine! I shall never know a moment's peace after this!"

The body was buried on the next morning, and when the waters had closed over it there was not a dry eye in the ship.

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